

MIDNIGHT SPECIAL BLUES RADIO GOES PRESS

BLUES ROCKS

the world

INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT MUSIC MAGAZINE

N° 1 • SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2007



Pugsley Buzzard

Sean Costello

Dr. BenDix

Eugenio Finardi

Martian Acres

Pete Mitchell

The Others

Bass Reeves

Robert Ross

Gary Sellers

John Earl Walker

Dick Wooley



COVER STORY: **BLUE PLATE SPECIAL**

BLUES ROCKS
the world

IN STORES 3 SEPTEMBER!



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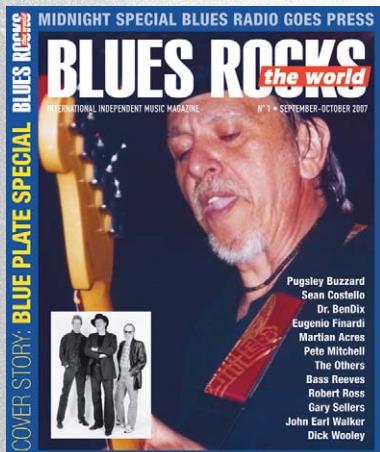
*“Swagger ... leaves the listener in little doubt
that Siegal is the cleverest writer and most magnetic
performer of blues in the UK.”*

MOJO ★★★★ PICK OF THE MONTH

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HAVE YOU EVER SEEN MILESTONES IN THE MIDDLE OF A DESERT, WHERE there's no road? Can you imagine the night sky with no other stars but those forming the constellations listed in the textbooks? Certainly not, and yet this is how the music industry presents the contemporary music scene. Too many people take this limited picture for granted, without asking themselves, "Hey, but if there are milestones, then there is necessarily a road, and if there is a road, then somebody should have paved it!"

The purpose of this magazine is to show that there are more stars in the sky than a handful of constellations and to present to the world those who have paved and go on paving the road of the blues – the unknown Masters.

With all respect to the roots, it's the tree above, the branches and leaves that we will pay more attention to. Blues is not an old dying man whom we love and "keep alive" almost against his will. The age of the blues is defined by the age of the artists that play it and of their listeners. Seen this way, blues is in his middle forties, full of creative imagination and living energy. The best way to "keep him alive" is to let him live as he feels he should.

Since January 16, 2004, I've been running the *Midnight Special Blues Radio* – an Internet station, which broadcasts exclusively the music of unsigned blues and blues-rock bands and the releases of small independent labels. Since September 1st, 2004, the program has been accompanied by a Web site. During this period, more than 4000 songs of nearly 1000 bands from all around the world have received airplay. But being broadcast on the Internet doesn't change much for a band if the press and the industry ignore it. So I thought something else should be done...

Blues Rocks the World has been born out of a dream two months ago. In the morning of July 1st, it has ... just appeared to me. It looked so real that I could turn the pages, make out some headlines and photos, read some phrases in the articles. Along came the feeling of certitude that I can and should make this "dream magazine" come true...

I thought of this new magazine not as an opposition to the existing music press, but as an enriching addition to it. A conflict of interests exists between the music and the industry, but not between artists themselves, signed or unsigned, unknown or famous.

Johnny Carson once called Sammy Davis, Jr. "the greatest entertainer this world has ever seen." Sammy's answer was, "Hey, there's some guy working in a garage somewhere who's got us all beat!"

Blues Rocks the World is a tribute to that guy.

Paul Bondarovski





‘what kind of blues is that?’

Rusty Wright Blues



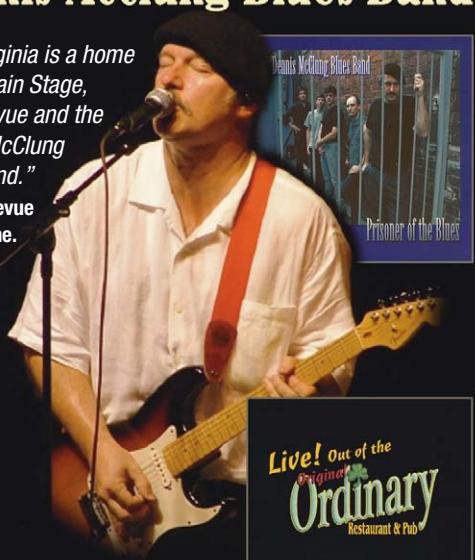
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— Blues Revue Magazine.



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the world

INTERNATIONAL INDEPENDENT MUSIC MAGAZINE

№ 1 • SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2007

www.bluesrocks.net

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Sean Costello

By Iain McCray Martin – THE EMORY WHEEL

"Somebody's got to come along and bring this music to a younger audience"

As I step into Sean Costello's Atlanta home, he asks me to excuse the mess. "Sorry man, things have been kind of crazy lately," he says.

A weathered piano sits in the corner below a mantle heaped with a seemingly endless collection of albums. Amplifiers rest near the door, experiencing a short vacation from their familiar home in the touring van. My eyes land on a black guitar case, the protector of Costello's 1953 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop, one of about 20 guitars of its kind. This is the way real blues musicians live.

At 28, Costello has been touring almost constantly for nearly a decade. By this point, "it's more foreign to me to be home and having to keep up with things like laundry and garbage pick-up," he says with a laugh.

Since the release of his newest album, *Sean Costello*, in January 2005, he's found little time for these daily rituals.

After an intense tour of the U.S. earlier this year, Costello spent a stretch in Holland, on one night headlining a show for a crowd of more than 5,000.

"It's nice. I've been a lot of places that I would never have had a chance to go if it wasn't for my music career," Costello said. "It's pretty amazing – people are paying you to come to their country and play."



Back at home, Costello continues his relentless touring schedule. Tonight, he begins a two-night stint at Northside Tavern, returning to Atlanta where he got his start close to 10 years ago.

With the release of his debut album, *Call the Cops*, when he was just 17, Costello became known as a bona fide bluesman. His pairing of raw blues classics with authentic originals helped critics quickly recognize his talent.

A year later, Costello, a senior in high school, provided substantial guitarwork on Susan Tedeschi's album, *Just Won't Burn*. The album sold more than 500,000 copies.

"I didn't expect the album to be so successful. I just thought it was a blues record I was doing," Costello says. "I was graduating high school, and I got paid like \$600, so I was thinking, 'This is fantastic!'"

Today, Costello continues to breathe new life into the blues while preserving its essence. Moving into other genres, such as soul, funk, gospel and rock, he's found a new evolution in his style, hitting a groove that combines these sounds while paying respect to authentic blues.

Costello's newest album features rich covers of Al Green and Bob Dylan, combined with seven equally impressive original tracks.

"I've sort of loosened up, and I appreciate all sorts of music," Costello said. "I'm just absorbing it all and trying to find my own mix."

An all-star cast of outside talent helped Costello find this sound in the studio. Steve Jordan and Willie Weeks, both of whom were backing Eric Clapton on his recent tour, lent their rhythmic talents on drums and bass on multiple tracks.

Others who played alongside Costello were Levon Helm, drummer and primary lead singer of The Band, his daughter Amy Helm and members of her hit folk band Oabelle.

Having shared the stage with artists ranging from B.B. King to Elvis Costello (no relation), this was far from Sean's first collaboration with musical heavyweights.

"I've gotten to play with a lot of great musicians, and I'm honored to

be able to do that," Costello said. "I've been lucky to play with my heroes."

Although the newest album was well-received, Costello isn't entirely pleased with its commercial impact.

"Some days, I'm not so pleased with the industry, but I'm not going to stop. It's what I do," Costello says.

Costello now looks to continue his success as a recording artist. Work on his upcoming fifth solo release in just over a decade has already garnered interest from several labels.

"We're kind of in the middle of the process," Costello says. "I'm trying a lot of different styles, some rock stuff, some soul, some straight blues. It's kind of eclectic. I want to make sure that the next one I put out is really special and better than the one before."

He and his current band of Aaron Trubic and Ray Hangen on bass and drums, respectively, are also planning the release of a live concert DVD, filmed earlier this year at Smith's Olde Bar in Atlanta.

"Somebody's got to come along and bring this music to a younger audience," Costello says. "When young people do show up, they like it. They're just not exposed to it. It's just not mass-marketed like a lot of pop."

Costello's stay in Atlanta will be short-lived. He'll soon be back out on the road promoting the blues the old fashioned way: just the man, his guitar, the band and the open road. IWR

Website: www.seancostello.com

The Emory Wheel is the student newspaper of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia.



PHOTO BY SUZANNE FOSCHINO © 2006

Gary Sellers

Fresh new stream in a good old river

eye of Long Island blues legend Sam Taylor, who would eventually become his mentor.

Gary followed the Sam Taylor Band closely before signing on as its regular guitarist and adding his soulful voice on background vocals. Taylor guided his growth as a musician and even helped Gary to craft a few of the tunes on his debut album, *Young Man with the Blues*.

For the past 10 years, Gary has toured much of the East Coast, performing at countless clubs and festivals with his own band as well as the Sam Taylor Band. He has shared the stage with blues legends like Gary "US" Bonds, Debbie Davies, Frank Bey, Little Buster, Maxine Brown, Doug "Harmonica" McLean, to name a few. Gary's unmistakable guitar, harmonica and vocals can be heard on numerous recordings, including Sam Taylor's *Voice of the Blues*, *Bluzman Back Home* and *Portrait: The Funky Side of Sam*, Pat Hunter's *Life Lessons*, and Rob Halligan's *The New York Sessions*.

Gary defies expectations. He does not fit the stereotype of a blues man, but he is a worthy inheritor to the tradition – he's got the heart and the chops to carry the torch for a new generation. P.B.

Website: www.garysellers.com



by Paul Bondarovsky

“THE FIRST TIME I heard the blues, it was in 1964. My father had just passed and we went to stay with relatives for a while in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. I was 14, and some old Beatnik at a hip old record store told me that since I was from Chicago, I needed to get with the sound of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. It was the turning point for me. During the next six years, I dug deeper into the root electric blues players like Muddy, the Wolf, and John Lee Hooker. It was then that Harry and Gary Maier and I first started playing music together.” – R. P. MICHAELS.

Blue Plate Special

The ‘Fab Three’ of the Blues

Blue Plate Special was originally formed in the summer of 1969 by Ron “R.P.” Michaels (aka Ron Michael Parizek) on vocals, bass and keyboards, Harry Binford on guitar and Gary Maier on drums. This was while all they were attending the College of DuPage (Glen Ellyn, Illinois), holding jam sessions in a Lombard garage. By this time, each had spent several years playing with high school bands – Ron Michaels at St. Francis High School in Wheaton, Harry at Wheaton North and Gary at Wheaton Central, where he bought a secondhand drum set from fellow student John Belushi. Belushi became a close friend of all three, and they suffered seeing him self-destructing, but couldn’t do anything, and it’s with him in mind that Michaels and Maier later wrote “Bad Drugs and Alcohol.”

“Things got a bit strange in the late 60s and 70s,” Michaels said to Lynn Van Matre of the *Chicago Tribune* in November 1999. “There were people we were friends with then who aren’t around anymore. But we weren’t into music for the wild women and alcohol. The three of us always have been pretty grounded individuals, which is why we’re still around today.”

The trio started as the Overland Band, then changed the name to Blue Plate Special.

They weren’t always a trio, but this was the core, the heart of the band.

At various times the additional members were Carson Landis (on second guitar), Paul Coscino, Studebaker John (on harp), Tony Tetrow, Don Kantro, Suzy Fields, John Deasy, Sonny Bauer, Mark Kelly and Richard Keuhl.

In the early 70s, bands that played the blues exclusively were rare, even in Chicago. But, there were more clubs in the area and more club owners who cared passionately about the music they booked. The audience loved Blue Plate Special’s innovative approach to the blues as positive oriented music, and the band continued on, playing their own gigs, as well as assisting others to play theirs. These “others” included Muddy Waters, Chicago Slim, Sam Lay, J. B. Hutto, Lavelle White.

“Back in the 60s, our dream was to make music a full time career,” said Gary Maier in 1999. “But we always found ourselves in a position where the music we were playing was a little ahead or a little behind what was popular.”

Bill Trout, a Chicago mover and shaker, found them one night in 1971 at Beaver’s, on State Street in Chicago. He tried to help them get better exposure and become recording



Back in 1976.

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(WWW.BILLHOTTINGER.COM),
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(WWW.BLUEPLATESPECIALBAND.COM),
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(WWW.PASENKO.COM).



Left to right: Gary Maier, Ron Michaels and Harry Binford back in 1975.

“We always found ourselves in a position where the music we were playing was a little ahead or a little behind what was popular.”

— GARY MAIER.

artists, but Mercury Records and Trout's organization were moving to the West Coast... Two singles were cut, but lost in the shuffle with no label support. Over the years they have released one vinyl album and four EP's on Summit Records, but all went out of print long ago.

One night back in 1971, Muddy Waters was playing in Chicago at a small but popular club called Alice's Revisited. Ron Michaels remembers: “During a set break, one of my friends and Lee Jackson, Muddy's bassman that night, snuck out in the alley (as musicians sometimes do). Lee told me that if the band comes back to the stage early, I

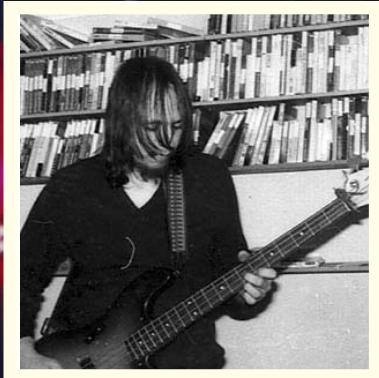
should grab his bass and play along. I guess he didn't think Muddy was going to hit the stage right away. Sammy Lawhorn acknowledged me sitting in, but then Muddy came up and looked puzzled seeing me and asked 'Where's Lee?' I said, 'Out back,' to which he responded, 'I hope you know Honey Bee.' It was one of the scariest moments of my career! All that pressure! It went well, so I was allowed to play two more tunes. I'm sure Lee got a scolding after the show. Later Muddy took my name and number and actually called me to play on future dates.”

In the early 70s, Willie Dixon heard the singles they cut and helped the trio by making calls on their behalf to land spots at Pepper's Lounge, then at the High Chapparal, where they opened for Bobby Womack.

That particular gig was where they met another icon of the blues. After their set, a flashy dressed man approached Ron and said, “I dug your music, I can tell you write your own. That last song you done was tight, did you write that one, too?” Ron said, “Hell, no! That was called 'Snatch It Back,' Junior Wells wrote that.” To which the reply was, “Damn right, I did... Hi, I'm Junior. Willie told me to drop by.”

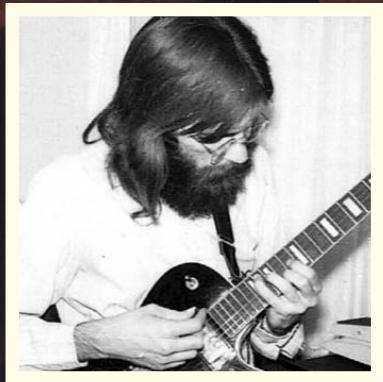
In 1978, Mickey Gilley found the band in Florida and tried to get them recorded on Playboy Records, but once again things there were collapsing.

The trio continued to play 35 to 50 dates annually, almost all in the Chicago area. Michaels worked days as plant manager for a metals company, Binford in computer technical support, and Maier in retail finance, still only dreaming of making music a full time career. It was another 20 years before they finally gave up the hope of being welcomed by the music industry, deciding to release their records themselves. Fortunately, the arrival of compact disks made it financially affordable and technically easier. They could not afford to hire an award-winning producer, but for this debut album, they didn't really need one.



R. P. Michaels





Harry Binford



In 1997, still together after almost 30 years, Ron, Harry and Gary went to Crystall Recorders studios at South Brewster Avenue in Lombard. Their journey as recording artists in their own right seemed to have come full circle, as the studio was not far from the garage where Ron and Harry met for the first time back in 1969.

Their first album, *No Place To Fade* (1998) was engineered by Charlie Prazma, mastered by Vince Micko, and produced by Ron Michaels. It featured only two guests – Vince Willis played piano on three tracks, and one of the past band members Suzy Fields helped with background vocals and album design. In the liner notes, Ron wrote: "This record is full of positive oriented music." This was always a "trade mark" of Ron Michaels as a songwriter – to provide positive energy, to inspire. In his interview with Peter Quinones of *Alternative World Magazine* he defined his philosophy on music and the blues in particular: "The purpose of the blues to me is to air what's bothering you, talk about it, find resolution, and have a good time while doing it. I think blues music is here to help you understand the things that go wrong in this life and get over them. Blues is like Zen, there are a lot of good stories out there to help you deal with or make sense of our or others errors. I don't write songs that dwell on problems and push for revenge. Mine are more about getting past the problems and finding solutions to make our lives better."

The audience got the message, and most importantly, it was a younger audience. "When you're 50 years old, it's tough to get your buddies to come out to a club to see you every Friday night," Maier said. "But we get a lot of younger people at our shows now." The press, which rarely pays much attention to "non-recording" bands, was surprised by the maturity of their astounding debut CD and wondered "where these guys have been for so long" (*In The Mix*, 1998). They just couldn't believe that Blue Plate Special were around for *twenty-nine* years!



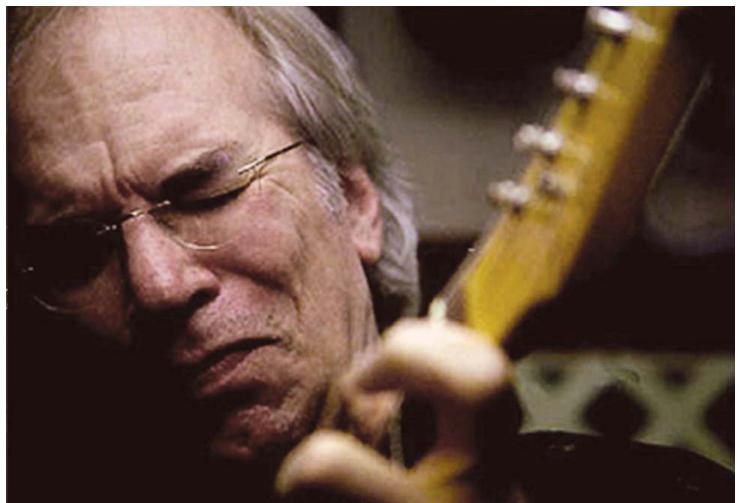
R. P. Michaels at the Jody Noa Memorial.

"The success of people like Stevie Ray Vaughan opened the doors for bands like us."

— HARRY BINFORD.



Carson Landis and Gary Maier at Ron's birthday party. 17 October 2000.



Harry Binford on stage at Blues Etc.

“Don’s amazing ears and technique help us shine.” – RON MICHAELS ABOUT DON GRIFFIN’S PRODUCTION WORK ON *CAN YOU DIG IT!*



Kevin Johnston

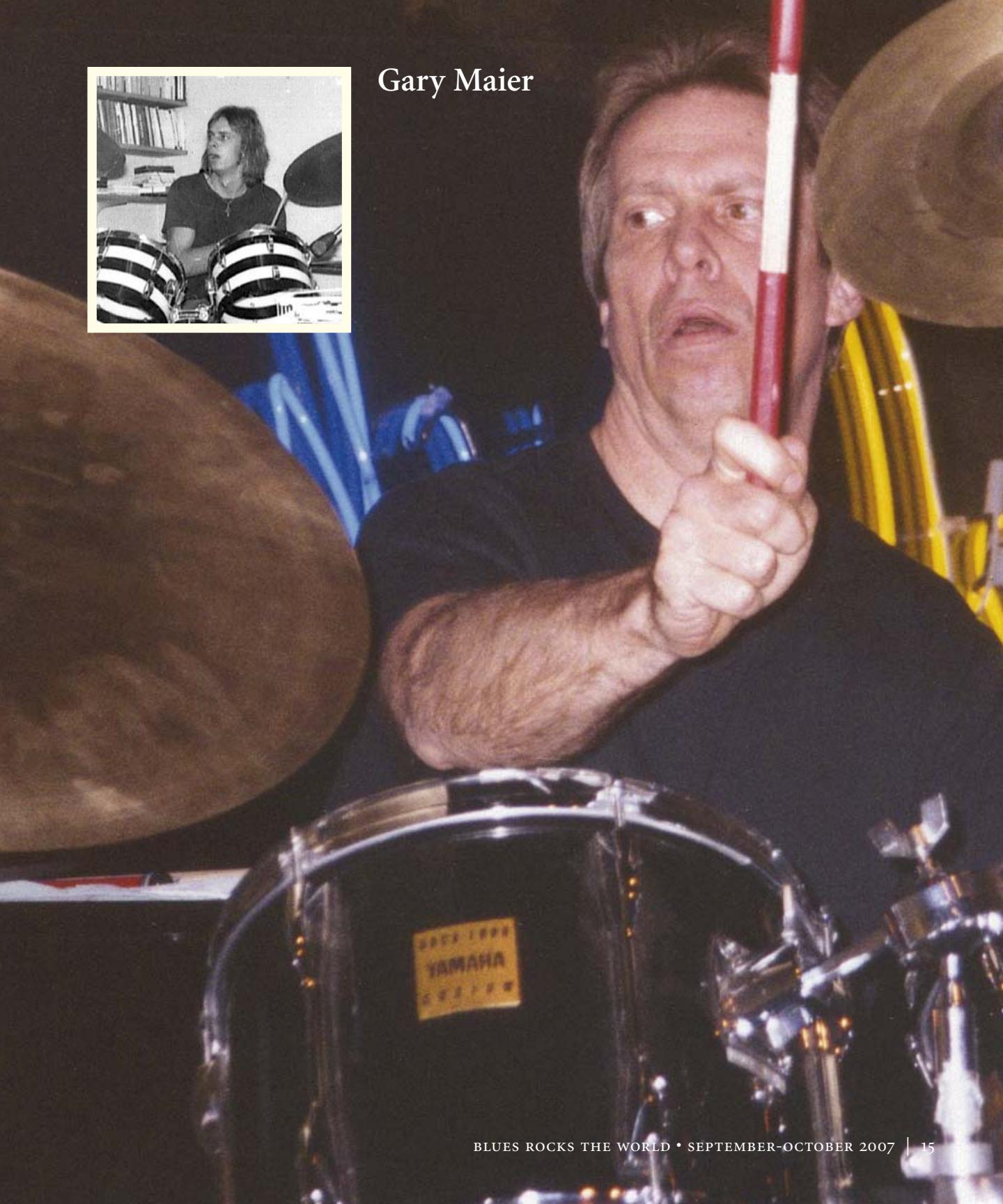
No Place To Fade was not just a local success, it got airplay in Europe, and the band started to work on an overseas distribution deal. The stars and living legends of the blues, this time without knowing it, continued to “make calls” on behalf of the trio. “The success of people like Stevie Ray Vaughan opened the doors for bands like us,” Binford said in 1999 to the *Chicago Tribune*.

Their second CD, *The Blues Ain’t Pretty*, produced by Ron Michaels and Charlie Prazma, followed in 1999 (officially released on 15 January 2000), featuring, like the first, only one additional instrumentalist, Mark Zelupugas on harp. The album achieved even greater success and wider global airplay – Australia, England, Poland... As did *No Place To Fade*, this album garnered some brief but very encouraging comments in *Blues Revue*. *Big City Blues* published a full-length review, whose author expressed his amazement “by the tremendous indie market that feeds the labels nowadays.”

An article in the *Chicago Tribune*, as well as reviews in the national music press, contributed to important changes on the music club scene, which became more open for independent blues bands. The time has come for Blue Plate Special, in their turn, to “make a call” on behalf of their unsigned “brothers in blues,” to open the doors for bands like themselves.

With two groundbreaking albums selling well in stores, every appearance of the trio “packed the house pretty good”, according to Jim Karwoski, manager of John’s Buffet in Winfield, who has booked Blue Plate Special off and on since the 1980s. He added, “For a band to still be playing together with three of the original members after 30 years is pretty unusual nowadays.” It didn’t last much longer, though. In 2004, Gary Maier retired and was replaced by Kevin Johnston, formerly the drummer for Buddy Guy. They had first met Kevin many years back at Rory’s Music Cafe. They were inspired by the same “Chicago greats,” and in addition, Harry

Gary Maier



Robert Pasenko



Binford was a big fan of Santana, and Kevin – of all the Santana drummers.

With this lineup, Ron, Harry and Kevin recorded the third album of Blue Plate Special, *Can You Dig It!* (2006), their newest and very best. It was recorded at Studio VMR (Vital Music Recording) and co-produced by Don Griffin, a wonderful Chicago guitarist in his own right, turned engineer-producer. The results were cutting edge and true to Blue Plate Special. “Don’s amazing ears and technique help us shine,” wrote Ron Michaels in the liner notes. Once again, the only guest was Mark Zelepugas on harp.

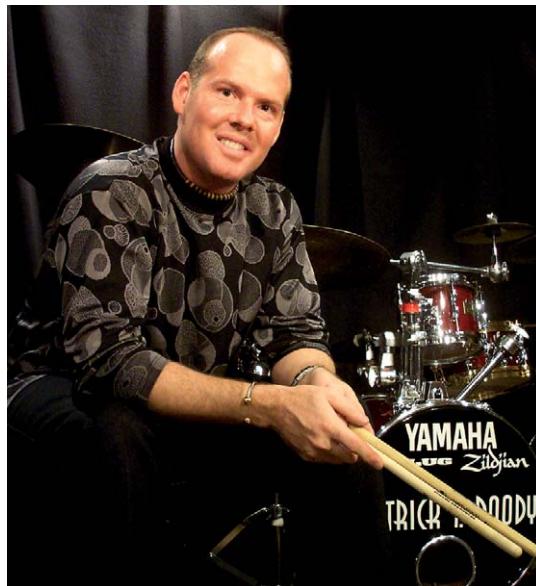
The album contained 11 originals, penned by Ron Michaels, and three covers, two of which, “Have a Little Faith” and “Unchain My Heart,” seemed to have been intentionally placed in the very end. I asked why these songs were included, when they seem to be in the repertoire of almost every other blues band. Ron’s answer, “These were added for our friends who have always requested we record them,” made me smile. The Beatles used to release once a year a special “Christmas record” exclusively for members of their official fan club. Blue Plate Special made a similar gift to their friends and supporters ... right on the album! No surprise that when further in the notes Ron said that he still plays bass and keys at the same time, adding, “... and yes, my brain hurts,” it reminded me Ringo exclaiming “I’ve got blisters on my fingers!” in the end of “Helter Skelter.”

It remains a mystery to me, why Midnight Special Blues Radio, based in France, so far from Chicago, was the first Web radio station Ron Michaels submitted *Can You Dig It!* to. I received it on 13 February 2006 and immediately put four tracks on the playlist. The next day three of them, “Workin’ On Love,” “Yer’ Bad Behind” and “Luck Runs Out” entered the Top 5 of the station’s daily charts and stayed there for weeks, each in its turn making it #1. Later, when I received their first and second albums and put three tracks from each on the program, there were



Ron: “I still play bass and keys at the same time ... and yes, my brain hurts!”

“I don’t write songs that dwell on problems and push for revenge. Mine are about getting past the problems and finding solutions to make our lives better.” – R. P. MICHAELS



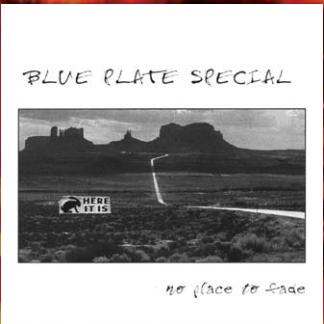
Patrick T. Doody

THE BLUE PLATE SPECIAL DISCOGRAPHY



Can You Dig It!
(2006, self-release)

The Blues Ain't Pretty
(2000, self-release)



No Place to Fade
(1998, self-release)

Buy these CDs at one of your favorite
online music shops!

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days when eight of them were in the Top 20! Midnight Special Blues Radio is broadcast by Live365.com, where listeners can only rate the tunes they're actually listening to and only while they're listening. There are no rating polls on the station website, so any corporate push is impossible. Knowing it better than anyone else, knowing also that in 2006 the station had listeners in more than 120 countries, I could not believe my eyes seeing such a huge and undeniable international success of a band most people never heard of before!

One of the reasons why Ron Michaels found it so important for the album to get airplay on Internet stations was that their audience is relatively younger than that of terrestrial radios. "Our mission has always been to entertain blues fans and hopefully attract some new blood – to keep alive not only the history of the blues, but also its future."

In Chicago, it's difficult to find an accomplished blues drummer ready to devote all his time to one act. By the end of 2006, the band was so busy with promoting their new album, that Kevin Johnston had to leave, unable to follow the tightly-filled schedule. The trio continued on with their old friend Patrick T. Doody (formerly with Lonnie Brooks and Wayne Brooks), a blues drumming guru, who runs the renowned Drumhead Recording studios. In June 2007, Robert Pasenko, another Chicago blues drumming authority, sat in as a new full time member.

Actually the band is endeavoring to recreate the old Chicago tradition of a blues house gig at Villa Verone and to further develop their flow of music and stage presence, so the jamming does not cease. Occasionally the band's original drummer Gary Maier joins them, though his health restrictions still remain a focus.

"Recording the albums is one thing in itself," says Ron, "but the music doesn't stop there. Fresh ideas come along all the time, you have to be open to them."

BB

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Pugsley Buzzard

Pugsley's sound has been compared to Louis Armstrong, Tom Waits and Dr. John. His latest album incorporates various styles, from New Orleans funk to Harlem stride, bebop and modern improvisation.

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Warner Music Asian Division.

"Girl, you got it!"
— Kim Wilson,
The Fabulous Thunderbirds.

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Do You Know?
(2003)

You Already Know
(2005)

Magic Box
(2006, live,
featuring
Luther Kent)

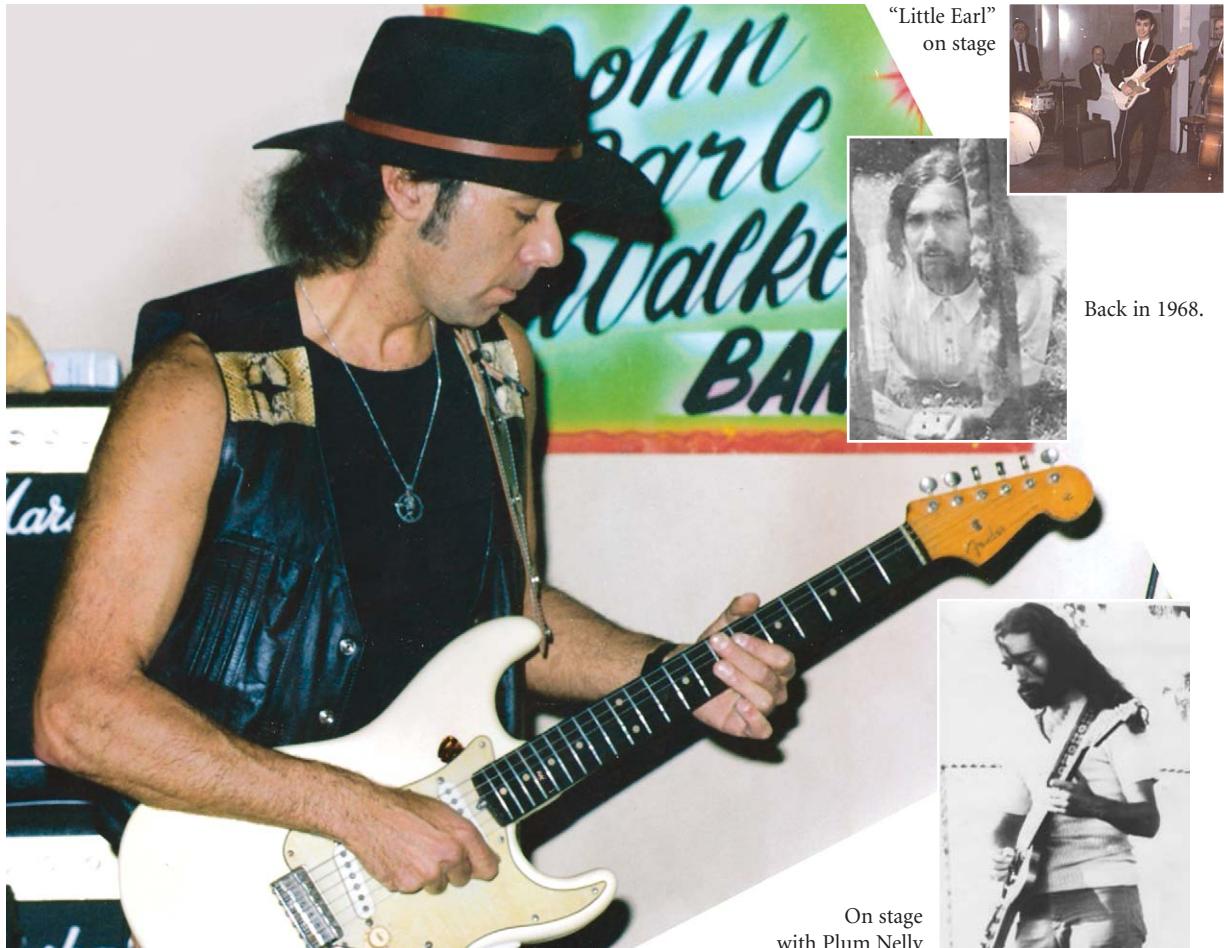
Rebel! (2007)

ROBI ZONCA
and his band

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John Earl Walker

Through the Odds ... Brightly



by Paul Bondarovsky

JOHN EARL WALKER happened to be the very first artist to contact me asking if he could send his CD for airplay on *Midnight Special Blues Radio*, which was then, in the spring of 2004, just a couple of months old. I hadn't heard of him before, but was immediately blown away by the tunes he sent me. In the very beginning, MSBR didn't make a distinction between the signed and unsigned artists. The very fact that the music of John Earl Walker was unknown elsewhere in the world just because he was independent and had no major label behind, impressed me so much that some days later the decision was made: the station would be exclusively

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF JOHN EARL WALKER

dedicated to the music of independent (unsigned, underground, “indie” – you chose) blues and blues-rock bands and small independent labels.

It was a risky decision, because I didn’t know then if there were enough artists of John Earl’s caliber to fill the program. How naive I was – there was an entire new world to discover, a new Universe to explore! I thought I knew the “route of the Blues,” but I learned very quickly that the legends and stars, however great they are, are just milestones on that route, which is paved by thousands of mostly unknown Masters. There are more bright stars in the sky than the constellations pictured in the text-books. John Earl Walker is one of such stars, a guiding one for me.

“Creedmore State is an exciting group to look out for.” – RECORD WORLD, 11 JULY 1970.

CREEDMORE STATE
Appearing:
July 15-19
ELECTRIC CIRCUS
July 20-25
UNGANO'S
VILLAGE GATE
Aug. 4 - Aug 8
ROCK MAGAZINE:
“Undiscovered group with lots of talent”
CASHBOX:
“Strong contribution to the scene”
BILLBOARD:
“Creedmore has arrived”
RECORD WORLD:
“The most dynamic new group on the scene”

Village Voice, 1970.

John Earl Walker (b. 13 May 1951, Brooklyn, New York) grew up listening to the rock and roll music of the day on the radio, and to the records in his older sister’s collection. At 13, he began playing electric guitar and developed so rapidly on the instrument that soon had a whole repertoire of rock standards. But what he dreamed of was to create his own music, his sublime *alter ego*.

Only a few months after having touched the guitar strings for the first time, he had formed a four-piece band called the PJ’s. They began playing local gigs, with some success. In 1965 he joined the Bards, led by Denny and Barney McMahon, then, some months later, the Loose Ends, headed by Vinny Guastella (lead vocals and bass) and also featuring Al Carlson (drums), George Fazio (rhythm guitar) and Gabriel Forzano (Hammond B-3 organ). The Loose Ends were very popular in the clubs and were even introduced on the Clay Cole Show on Channel 11 in New York. It was with the Loose

Ends that John began infusing original songs he wrote into the mix, along with some wild guitar playing.

His next group was Plastic People, a 7-piece psychedelic blues set formed in 1967. For the first time in John’s life they were doing all his originals. The group broke up the same year, and the lead singer Barney McMahon with his brother Denny McMahon hooked up John Earl, bassist Steve Ress and drummer Chris Lloyd to form a blues-rock trio called Creedmore State. They set up the first jam in Barney and Denny’s basement, and hit the road without delay. To round out the sound they invited Ric Prince as lead singer. With this 4-piece lineup they went to Ungano’s in New York City for an audition and were immediately accepted as the house band. Peter Harris was then called to take over on bass, and Steve Ress returned to second guitar. At Ungano’s the band supported many blues and rock greats, such as the Kinks, Savoy Brown, Fleetwood Mac, Buddy Guy, Bo Diddley, Dr. John, Jimi Hendrix...

Creedmore State had a huge following. *Rock Magazine* called them “An undiscovered group with lots of talent,” and *Record World* – “One of the most dynamic new groups on the scene... An exciting group to look out for.” It came as no surprise that within a year they were signed to prestigious Capitol Records. With a new chapter starting in their lives, they changed the band’s name to Plum Nelly.

Their debut LP *Deceptive Lines* (Capitol ST 692, producer Kenneth Cooper) was recorded in November-December 1970 and released in the early spring of 1971 to rave reviews and lots of worldwide airplay. The lineup on the record included John Earl (lead guitar), Ric Prince (lead vocals), Peter Harris (bass), Steve Ress (rhythm guitar, vocals), and Christopher Lloyd (drums). Guest artists were Jeremy Steig (flute and piccolo) and Dave Bash Johnson (congas on “Carry On”). The album met all criteria for a huge commercial success. “Take note and watch

this one move," advised *Billboard*. "A fascinating collection of material... An interesting twist to ordinary rock music," added *Cashbox*. "Their ideology is that 'if you have any energy and creativity, it will show through in your music.' Plum Nelly has both," wrote *Hollywood Press*. One of the album's tracks, "Lonely Man's Cry," featured the Sweet Inspirations, a legendary trio, led by Cissy Houston (Whitney Houston's mom), who were the backup singers for Elvis Presley and Aretha Franklin during that period. Still the folks at Capitol were not sure and left the album promotion to the band alone. With the lack of label support, the LP soon went out of print and became a much sought after rarity.

Disappointed by the way that things were going, Ric Prince left the band in the summer of 1971. His replacement on lead vocals was Bobby Eulo, but for one year only. In 1973, Chris Lloyd and John Earl Walker reformed Plum Nelly with Bob Feit on bass and Norman Ross on second guitar. They toured the U.S., then in 1974 relocated to Los Angeles, with John Murphy on bass and Steve Ress on second guitar. At the time they were affiliated with A&M Records and



The John Earl Walker Band, the first incarnation. From left to right: Bob Feit, Mickey Durio, Roberto Perez, John Earl Walker. Los Angeles, March 1977.



Plum Nelly at Carnegie Hall with The James Gang. 15 May 1971. Promotional poster.

"Their ideology is that 'if you have any energy and creativity, it will show through in your music.' Plum Nelly has both." – **HOLLYWOOD PRESS, JUNE 1975.**

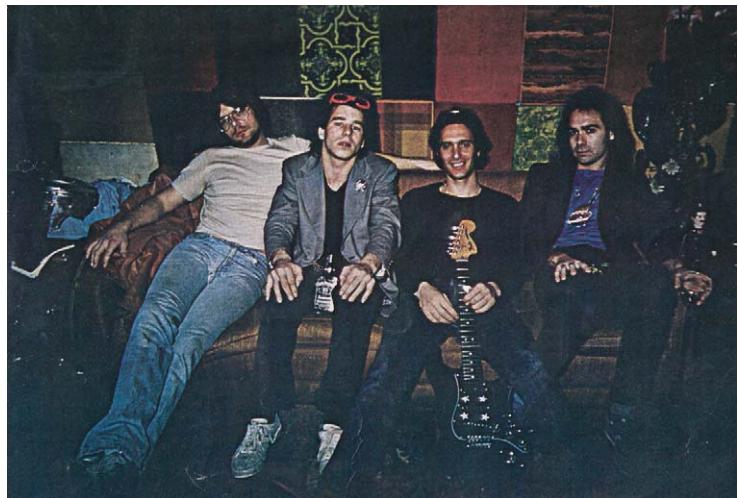
played all the major venues in Los Angeles, such as the Whiskey a Go Go, the Troubadour, the Starwood... A memorable event for John Earl was, in December of 1975, when he was asked to film a pilot playing guitar with B.B. King for channel 9 KHJ in Los Angeles called "Backstage Pass."

In 1977 the quartet broke up and John Earl formed his first blues group, the first incarnation of the John Earl Walker Band, with Bob Feit on bass (later joined Tina Turner's band), Roberto Perez on vocals, and Mickey Durio on drums. They played the Los Angeles club circuit for some months, but with less success.

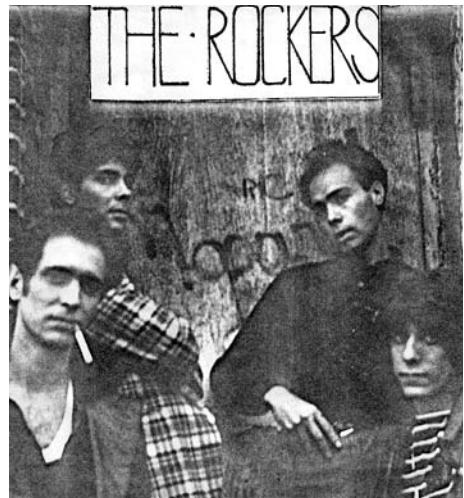
That was maybe the most stormy period in the whole rock history, especially difficult for the blues bands. By the end of the 1970s the music industry encouraged music fans to expect and demand frequent changes of direction and to constantly discard their



Deceptive Lines LP hasn't become "gold", but ... a gold's worth rarity.



John Earl Walker and the Rockers. 1978.



The Rockers. 1979.

heroes in favour of new models. Andy Warhol had it right when he said that in those days everyone would have just 15 minutes of fame.

“People deserted the bar to see what was happening. The band was driving hard, playing unabashedly.” — BAY NEWS, JUNE 1979.

Non-conformist and rebellious only yesterday, the rock scene had suddenly turned glamorous, luxurious and complaisant, with California as its promised land. Even



The John Earl Walker Band in 1992.

Motown had moved out of Detroit to Los Angeles then. Fortunately, it was still possible to breathe in New York.

Later in 1977, John Earl returned there and put together a new group, John Earl Walker and the Rockers, with Bobby Moorehouse on bass, Joey Tremelo on second guitar and Dominique Mastri on drums.

If you're not a recording artist and don't have a "name," it is hard to get gigs doing your own material. And that was exactly the case of John Earl Walker and the Rockers. Only a small number of clubs would give them a chance to play, preferring "cover bands," so that the audience could dance to familiar hits.

One day they had knocked at the door of Zappa's, the newly-converted rock club at 3501 Quentin Road in Brooklyn, and were accepted. They made their public debut on Wednesday, so the audience consisted mostly of friends and a few middle-of-the-week barflies. Stephen Graziano, a reporter for the local daily *Bay News*, who happened to be there that night, wrote:

"The Rockers' set got off to a shaky start – understandable due to the nervousness of being in front of a real audience for the first

time. But they soon settled into a groove and suddenly something clicked. The foursome, consisting of John E. Walker on lead guitar and vocals, Joey Tremelo on guitar, Dominique on drums, and Bobby the House on bass had practically the entire audience on its feet and dancing by the middle of the set. People deserted the bar to see what was happening. The band was driving hard, playing unabashedly. Song after song built the intensity. The Rockers Wednesday night were living proof of the supremacy of The First Rule of Rock and Roll – you are supposed to have a good time. By the last number the audience was invited on stage with the band. The scene was truly memorable. The band was playing, the girls were dancing, and everybody was grabbing the microphones to join in on the chorus. That extended jam illustrated more about what rock-and-roll is than any number of Led Zeppelin, Jethro Tull, or E.L.P. covers could ever hope to do.”

In 1979 they became the Rockers, then the NY Rockers, with John Murphy on bass and Robby Frankel on drums. This lineup was more successful and even put in two appearances on the Uncle Floyd Show. They stayed together until 1983, when John Earl and Dominique formed the Safecrackers, also featuring Peter Harris on bass, Joey Tremelo on guitar, Johnny Dugan on sax, and JJ Blue as guest vocalist, with John Earl sharing vocals with Dominique.

In 1985 the John Earl Walker Band was formed. Constant members were Peter Harris or John Murphy on bass and Joey Tremelo on guitar, with drummer Bobby Infante joining in 1990. Since 1995, many of the band shows and studio recordings also featured Gene Cordew, a talented keyboard player from Little Buster and The Soul Brothers, and Johnny Byrne, a harp player and former bassist with the Housepainters.

The band recorded two live albums, *At Le Bar Bat* (1998) and *At Chicago B.L.U.E.S. New York City* (17 July 2001), without ever



John Earl Walker
at Le Bar Bat. 1998.

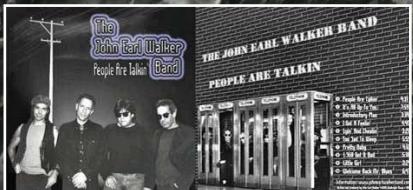


releasing them officially. Contrary to so many other blues bands, the stars were in alignment for the group's studio recordings. To this date, they have officially released three studio albums, all very successful: *I'm Leavin' You* (2003), *Little Miss Perfect* (recorded in 2002, but then fully remastered and officially released in 2005), and *People Are Talkin'* (2006).

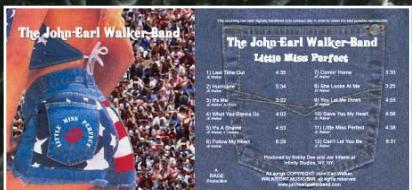


John Earl Walker, Gene Cordew and Joey Tremelo at Warwick Winery. 2006.

THE JOHN EARL WALKER BAND DISCOGRAPHY



People Are Talkin'
(2006,
self-release)



Little Miss Perfect
(2005,
self-release)



I'm Leavin' You
(2003,
self-release)



*Live at Chicago
B.L.U.E.S.
New York City*
(2002,
self-release*)



Live at Le Bar Bat
(2002,
self-release*)

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* out of print

Jim Tillerman wrote about *I'm Leavin' You* in *Southwest Blues*: "... The more I listen to it, the more I dig it. John Earl Walker's guitar has a low down natural sound (no extra whistles and bells), and a vocal style all his own. John Murphy on bass and Bobby Infante on drums lay down a solid base for Mr. Walker to work his magic on... Walker's songwriting and guitar playing both have a good sense of humor mixed with some very tasty licks..."

David McPherson wrote about *Little Miss Perfect* on *Indie-Music.com*: "This New York-based guitarist has been electrifying audiences for the past 40 years. Digitally remastered, *Little Miss Perfect* captures a little bit of what it's like to hear John Earl and his bandmates tear the house down... One of his main influences, T-Bone Walker, echoes throughout the recording, but Walker has certainly developed his own blues style. Backed by a stellar lineup of musicians that individually over the years have played with everyone from B.B. King and Buddy Guy to Bo Diddley and Muddy Waters, *Little Miss Perfect* is a perfect mix of blues scorchers and soulful songs. Featuring a dozen Walker originals, this CD shows that even after four decades, this blues guitar great is not slowing down."

People Are Talkin' is an oeuvre of a great artist who has much to say and knows how to do it best. Three of the album tracks made it #1 on the Midnight Special Blues Radio daily charts – "Too Sad To Weep," "Welcome Back Mr. Blues" and "It's All Up To You." Almost all other tunes entered the Top 10 and stayed for weeks in the Top 50.

Introspective and openminded, sentimental and sarcastic, an accomplished bluesman and never giving up rocker, John Earl Walker is without a doubt one of the greats on the American blues-rock scene, an everlasting and evergrowing Event.

Website:
www.johnearlwalkerband.com

With BPL in the production seat and a hot new live band featuring members of the legendary Climax Blues Band, Keith Thompson is ready to preach the blues with a compelling combination of expertly crafted songs, incisive lyrics, total commitment vocals and desperate, troubled guitar...

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Who could expect Blues and Reggae to mix so naturally? Not a trace of experimenting – the album sounds as if this music genre always existed, but waited for Tim Hain to come and discover it. –

Midnight Special Blues Radio

www.note-music.co.uk
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Boss Tweed

"The new sound of Americana roots music is evident in the dark blues and eerie twang of Brooklyn trio Boss Tweed."
– CD BABY

Boss Tweed

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Isn't It Good,

WHILE IT'S HARD TO SAY WHO IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WARMING OF OUR POOR OLD BLUE Planet globally, I think I know who's to blame for it in Norway. His name is Kjell Bendixen. Head, heart and spine of a blues-rock power plant called Dr. BenDix, every time he plugs his guitar and begins to play, the icebergs melt, hibernating bears wake up and Greenpeace rings the alarm bell...



Kjell at Bluescamp in Fredrikstad, 2006.

The most dangerous thing is that Dr. BenDix's shows are not those innocent half-hour shorties of the 1960s – they are 2 hours long, if they play their self-penned originals only, and can easily expand to 4 hours, if mixed with icebreaking covers from Stevie Ray Vaughan, Walter Trout, Peter Green, Muddy Waters, Allman Brothers, Johnny V, Johnny Winter, Jimi Hendrix and ZZ Top.

The band started in 1999 with Kjell Bendixen on guitar, harmonica, keyboards and vocals, Morten Hansen on bass guitar and Roger Vadseth on drums.

It should be said that being a blues band in Norway is a kind of challenge. In America even those who prefer other genres of music know what the blues is about, since they literally grow up with it. In other coun-

tries, blues music doesn't just come to you, you've got to get to it through records, books, videos. Only a few really feel like doing it. So for a blues band to be successful in France, Australia or Norway, the first thing it has got to do is prove to people that the blues is not that "really miserable tearful stuff" they used to take it for, but a "living thing," viable as any other music form, full of positive energy and energizing. And it should be proved at every show, on every record, in every tune. In other terms, playing blues in Norway involves more work and suffering than in America. This is why blues bands are scarce there, good ones are few, and Dr. BenDix is simply unique.

Recently Haavard Eidsaune replaced Morten Hansen on bass, and in 2005 the band became a quartet, with Henry Larsen on Hammond B-3. A fifth band member is Andreas Nygaard on mixerboard. Occasionally Kjell and Roger perform as a trio, with Ole "O.J." Jens on bass, as it was at the Smokie Blues Festival in Arbroath, Scotland, where they have been invited twice in 2006 and 2007.

With their original lineup, Dr. BenDix have recorded two CDs – *Life Is A Rocky Road* (2002) and *White Lies* (2003). Both self-released by Kjell, with ink-jet printed inlays and labels, without a trace of intention to "conquer the world." And yet they do!

When I ran into them for the first time at CD Baby and listened to some of their clips, they impressed me so much that I im-



Kjell and Ole Jens at the Smokie Blues Festival in Arbroath, Scotland.

Norwegian Mood?

mediately wrote to Kjell: "How could that be that I never played your songs?"

Dr. BenDix's blues leaves no time to feel blue. When it's hot, it's not even red – it's white hot! When it's slow, it's not sad – it's romantic! *Life Is A Rocky Road* seems to sound better as a whole, but *White Lies* attracts by its colorful mosaic of styles and arrangements. When played one after another, the two CDs sound like a well organized double album.

Both albums were initially released for sale at gigs only. Kjell has made them available at CD Baby on the off-chance that this outlet will reach more people. He didn't expect to sell many copies, he just wanted his music to get heard. CD Baby, a unique online music store that sells records by independent musicians only (no corporations!), is the best place for that.

"Benjamin's Song" entered the Midnight Special Blues Radio daily charts on 11 January 2007 right at #1 and stayed at the top for 12 days. The next day another song, "Happiest Man" joined at #2 (for 7 days). Two more songs, "Lovesong" and "Tears Of Life," made it to #5 and #10, respectively.

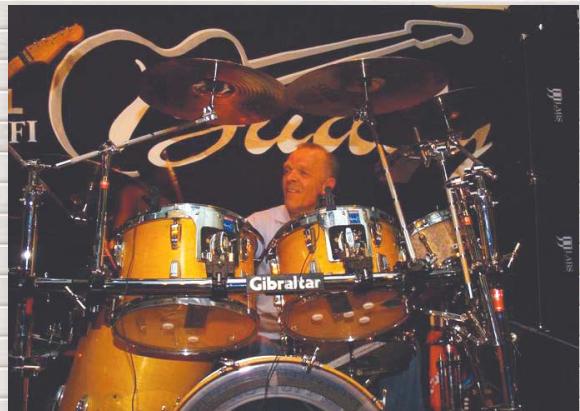
"I have two kids running around my feet, a three year boy and a five year girl," Kjell wrote to me, "and we heard 'Happiest Man' on your radio, and they were dancing like crazy!"

Hope they have danced every day since, because half a year after, Dr. BenDix is still on the charts.

You are both a great musician and a good father, Kjell – writing blues songs that make children dance!



Henry Larsen.



Roger Vadseth.



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF KJELL BENDIXEN

Kjell Bendixen and Haavard Eidsaune at Bluescamp in Fredrikstad, 2005.

Website: <http://www.drbendix.com/>

Martian Acres



THERE'S A FRIEND OF OURS WHO LABELED OUR SOUND 'ALT-BOULDER', AND he said it was because the music feels like some of the music that came out of Boulder in the early 1970s. There was all the Caribou Ranch activity, and the Eagles were working here, Joe Walsh, Bonnie Raitt. There tended to be a lot of musical styles, music that was very lyric-intensive and lots of harmony."

— DENNIS WANEBO.

Martian Acres

On a Mission from Mars

by Paul Bondarovski

Martian Acres is an unusual band with an unusual name, writing unusual songs, performing them in an unusual manner and getting unusual recognition for them. The band's name doesn't really have much to do with the colonization of Mars, but derives from Martin Acres, a 1950s era neighborhood in the southern part of Boulder, Colorado, bounded by U.S. Highway 36, Table Mesa Boulevard and Broadway, and consisting of 1,300 single-family homes and three apartment complexes.

The core of the band is comprised of singer Dennis Wanebo (59), a successful trial lawyer and amateur musician since his teens, and guitarist Bob Story (52), a full-time musician since 1987, when he toured with The Drifters. He has also taught at the Musician Institute in Hollywood and later happened to become Wanebo's guitar teacher.

About ten years ago, Dennis Wanebo came down with a bizarre, life-threatening disease. "The odds were very high that I was going to be permanently paralyzed or that it was going to kill me," he says. "It was very serious, and my recovery was totally off the charts. But I got all my function back, which was completely unexpected. It kind of shook me to my core. When something like that happens to you, suddenly the daily grind becomes a lot less important, putting bread on the table becomes a lot less important, and you find what your real priorities are. And I naturally started going back to music."

Wanebo and Story ran into each other in 2001 in Boulder musical circles. Both had grown listening to a lot of the same music,

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF MARTIAN ACRES



Bob, Dennis and Grace
in the studio.

both had a desire to write sophisticated songs with layers of instruments and vocal harmonies. They started to write the songs together, then brought in other singers and musicians – to flesh out the sound and to perform the songs live.

The first Martian Acres album, *Middle of the Night* (2003), featured Dennis' 19-year-old daughter Grace on vocals. It was recorded on a Roland 2480, a 24-track digital recorder, with all musicians playing in the same room that the recorder lived in. It took seven months to finish the recording, making time in between gigs, jobs, and families. "I was learning how to record during the process," says Bob Story, "and used the combined knowledge at VS-Planet [visit their website at www.vsplanet.com – P. B.], an on-



Dennis Wanebo.

line recording forum to complete the project. Many thanks go out to the people on the *Planet* for their ready answers and help.”

Martian Acres’ debut CD brought them the expected joy and satisfaction of a job well done. It also brought them something that they never expected: immediate and very favorable attention from almost every locale on the musical landscape.

The title cut, “Middle of the Night,” was number one on VS-*Planet* charts several

“A review on *Middle of the Night* stated our music was the equivalent of ‘drinking orange juice after tooth paste.’ We figured we can only go up in stature!” – BOB STORY.

times during 2004 and has been included on the VS-*Planet* best-of compilation for 2005. On Midnight Special Blues Radio the most successful were “Water Under the Bridge” (#4 on the station charts), “Middle of the Night” and “Dan’s Place.”

Two songs became finalists for the John Lennon International Songwriting Competition – “Diamond in the Rough” entered the Top 10, and “The Promise” received honorable mention. (The John Lennon songwriting competition takes place twice a year and receives tens of thousands of songs for consideration.)

“After receiving a review on *Middle of the Night* that stated our music was the equivalent of, ‘drinking orange juice after tooth paste,’ we figured we can only go up in stature!” says Bob.

And they did! The bands’ second CD, *From Waltz to War*, released in June 2006, reflected their growth as songwriters and performers, as well as their increased skills in recording and production.

The CD Release Party at Nissi’s in Lafayette, Colorado, was sold-out and a huge success with a stunning song list that had the audience roaring for more.

“I am totally excited about the work we have done on *From Waltz to War*,” Bob Story says. “Songs about love with happy endings still live with songs about the darker side of life. From rolling-down-the-highway broken-hearted songs to those dealing with the political state of our world, this album rocks harder with more continuity from beginning to end.

“We performed all compositions live with drums, bass, guitar and scratch vocals. This time drums were recorded in another room, and Tony Johnson played bass directly into the board... Getting the vocals right was challenging and fun with the studio closet standing in as the booth for Dennis and Grace. Those two were a pleasure to work with, they never stopped trying for the best take... Many songs were taken to Kem Stral-

ka's studio to mix. He has a Pro Tools rig with some nice software and great input paths. Being very helpful, he showed me many cool techniques that I eventually used on the mixes that I did at OilPan Studio. Kem is a drummer, too, and wound up recording a great drum track for 'Waltz.' For 'All I Ever Wanted,' Grace and I tracked live at Kem's studio."

The song "War (We've All Been Here Before)," a topical slightly political song, also released as a single, evokes a world sound thanks to the Middle Eastern style clarinet part played by Dexter Payne, the Master of *choro*, a unique Brazilian sound from the first half of the 20th century (imagine ragtime, traditional New Orleans jazz, plus Latin romantic song, all at once), which paved the way for samba and bossa nova.

The opening song "Road to Hell" was picked as a finalist in the Gospel/Inspirational category for the John Lennon Songwriting Competition (Session II, 2005). "This is exciting," says Bob, "because Barry Gibb, of the Bee Gees, was a judge and helped pick this song!" Dennis and Bob were huge fans of the Bee Gees in the early 1970s. "After that, it was Disco City for the guys, and the less said the better..."

Part of Martian Acres' rich sound comes from its mix of acoustic and electric instruments, including Dobro, steel guitar, mandolin, organ and clarinet.

"We try to incorporate as many instruments as we can," says Story. "I had a banjo that I got for a hundred bucks. I don't play



From Waltz to War Release Party at Nissi's (9 July 2006). Bob Story focused, Grace soaks in the audience roar.



Grace, Dennis, Chris Malley (guitar), Chris Engleman (bass), and Christian Teele (drums).

banjo, but this song was like, 'Oh, it needs a banjo,' so I spent a week trying to figure out how to play a part for it, and then I sold it soon afterward because I can't stand the sound of a banjo. It's like a pick in the head or something. But it worked for that song."

In July 2006, the song "One Way Blvd" topped Midnight Special Blues Radio's daily charts for 12 days, with "Into the Rain/Stevie" and "War" in the Top 5. One year after, they're still on the station playlist and, more than that – on the charts!

HR
FM

Website: www.martianacres.com

Middle of the Night
(2003, Bode Records)

MARTIAN ACRES DISCOGRAPHY

From Waltz to War
(2006, Bode Records)

Buy these CDs at your favorite online music shops!

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Meet Anima★Blues!

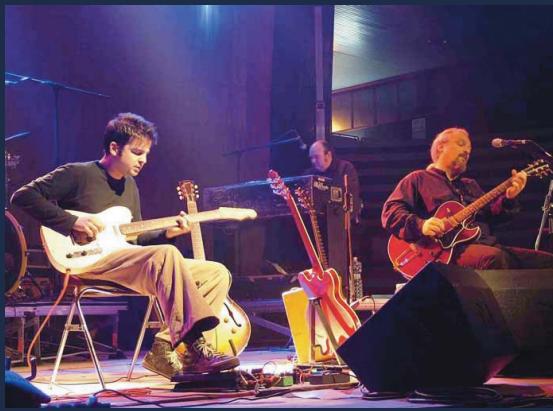
NEARLY 32 YEARS AGO, LATE SUMMER OF 1975! THAT'S WHEN I FIRST MET **Pippo Guarnera** – Sicilian Hammond supremo and, musically, one fourth of **Anima★Blues** (closer to one third, physically ;-) – in a hot, dingy garage crammed with instruments somewhere out in the sticks near Naples.

I had just vacated the keyboard chair of what was, at the time, one of Italy's top jazz-rock-funk outfits, and the band, Napoli Centrale, begged me to give them a hand with the new lineup's first day of rehearsals. I rolled up and asked my substitute – a huge, happy kid beaming up at me from behind what looked (next to him) like a shrunken Fender Rhodes – on which tunes and tricky riffs he needed a few pointers. Pippo just chuckled, shrugged and proceeded to tear into the repertoire as if he'd written it himself!

Thirty years down the road, his effortless command of any style and unfalteringly soulful use of his wondrous chops still leave me with the same huge, gaping grin I wore throughout that long-ago first rendezvous...

I met the skinny master of skins, **Vince Vallicelli**, about a year later in a Roman studio with his tight R'n'B combo, Zebra Crossing. My own band's guitarist was on the sessions and had invited me along. Killer players all, one of 70s made-in-Italy funk's finest groups... Vince was sure cookin' then and – as I witnessed during the making of **Anima★Blues** – plays today like he's been in the "soul kitchen" ever since! Heaping portions of blues, jazz, New Orleans funk (he's studied with the genre's guru, John Vida-covich) ... all served 24-7-365, steaming and *al dente!*

My good old Italo-American buddy **Eugenio Finardi** has been a star in Italy

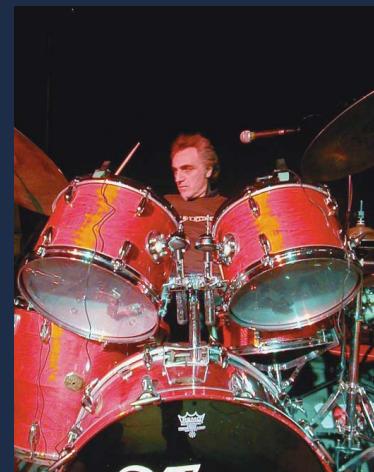


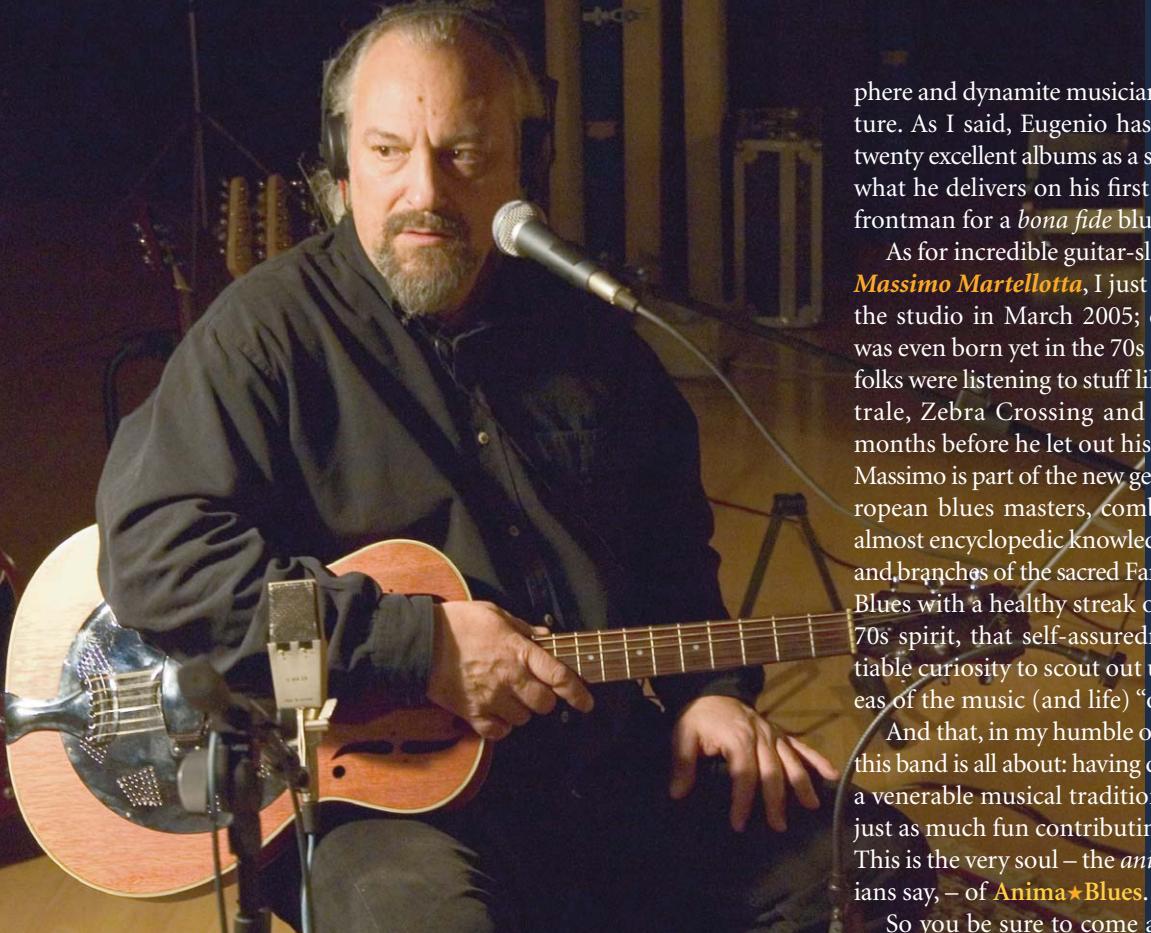
Massimo Martellotta, Pippo Guarnera and Eugenio Finardi.

Pippo Guarnera.



Vince Vallicelli.





Eugenio Finardi.



Massimo Martellotta.

since his first album came out in the mid-70s, and quite rightly; he's certainly the only singer here who can hold his own with equal authenticity on in-your-face rock-blues workouts as well as on heart-rending pop ballads, Portuguese fado numbers and straight classical arias. Eugenio's mother was an American opera singer, and his impeccable intonation and dynamic vocal control show it. He also inherited his sound engineer dad's golden ears, as evidenced in the mixes and the mastering of **Anima★Blues** and his score of well-crafted solo albums. I joined Eugenio's band in 1978 and we've worked (and raided sushi bars) together off and on over the years, but – as Eugenio agrees – the **Anima★Blues** sessions really stand out for the laidback studio atmos-

phere and dynamite musicianship they capture. As I said, Eugenio has made around twenty excellent albums as a soloist. Now dig what he delivers on his first appearance as frontman for a *bona fide* blues band!

As for incredible guitar-slinging prodigy **Massimo Martellotta**, I just met the guy in the studio in March 2005; don't think he was even born yet in the 70s ... but I bet his folks were listening to stuff like Napoli Centrale, Zebra Crossing and Eugenio nine months before he let out his first solo wail! Massimo is part of the new generation of European blues masters, combining a solid, almost encyclopedic knowledge of the roots and branches of the sacred Family Tree of the Blues with a healthy streak of the true 60s-70s spirit, that self-assuredness and insatiable curiosity to scout out unexplored areas of the music (and life) "out on a limb."

And that, in my humble opinion, is what this band is all about: having deep respect for a venerable musical tradition while having just as much fun contributing to its future. This is the very soul – the *anima*, as the Italians say, – of **Anima★Blues**.

So you be sure to come along now and meet the band, too, on the album and next time they have a gig anywhere near you; this debut recording will become a classic and – who knows? – you may get to reminisce about it in someone else's liner notes or press release in 2035!

TM

Website: www.animablues.com



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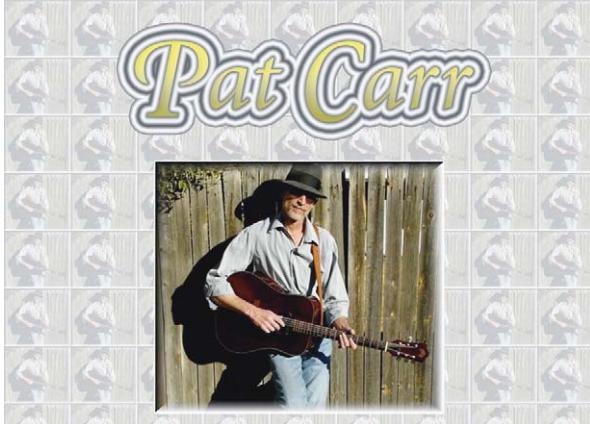
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Pat Carr

Put Yourself In My Place
2005

Some Kind Of Blues
2007



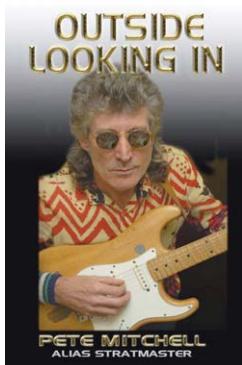
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Pete Mitchell

Outside Looking In



Pete Mitchell.
Outside Looking In.
Derwent Press, 2006.
ISBN 1-84667-011-X



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PETE MITCHELL

MUSICIANS RARELY WRITE BOOKS. Their “autobiographies” are usually written by journalists. This alone would be enough to make Pete Mitchell’s *Outside Looking In* a unique book. But there’s much, much more to it that makes his memoirs a “must read” for anybody interested in getting a true picture of what rock history is really about. Learning it only by glamorous video clips of the most successful stars is like trying to read a newspaper over somebody’s shoulder – you will make out some headlines, but not the news. Pete Mitchell’s story begins in the early 1970s and leads you through his thirty years on the British “rhythm and blues” scene. For some, the same scene became a “stairway to heaven,” but they were the exceptions. *Outside Looking In* is about the rule, according to which the road to success is covered with roses only in the sense that roses have thorns. Much of what Pete Mitchell went through is quite recognizable among musicians, there are many out there who will empathize with him. As for those unfamiliar with the music industry, they will be surprised to discover the “dark side” of it, where a real artist doesn’t just “play to live,” but “survives to play.” – P.B.

Pete Mitchell

Outside Looking In

An excerpt from the book

... UNKNOWN TO ME AT THAT TIME, there was a huge pop revolution waiting around the corner. In the early sixties, bands like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were surfacing. We were also about to experience the "Mersey sound" while, at the same time, there were English bands playing American blues, which was tagged "rhythm and blues." This was a real breath of fresh air for the guitarist. It forced the development of electric guitar playing outside of the acoustic folk approach, and it became an alternative to the disciplined instrumental type of play-

ing similar to the Shadows. Something I discovered at the start of my career was the fact that it was very important to have flexibility and be able to put my own character into what was being played and, at the same time, to feel an inner satisfaction. I have always had the opinion that the feel is far more important than anything else, particularly with the electric blues guitar. By its very nature, it needs expression and the right touch. The "rhythm and blues" music seemed to have the scope for this approach, whereas the "Mersey sound" had much more focus on melody and vocal harmony. This was a rich musical menu for me to feast on, and I knew that I would need plenty of time to digest it.

Noticing what was happening around me was becoming instinctive, I was always trying to find out what was going on musically. As far as the live aspect was concerned, I was well aware of the clubs and who played them. At the time of the "Mersey sound" explosion, I was going to folk clubs and playing with one or two folk guitarists. My first guitar had now become unplayable, and I became very interested in the folk club scene. Eventually, I made friends with a guitarist who played on the folk circuit, and he introduced me to some of the more established folk guitarists who were around at that time.

Obviously, I was very impressed with these players. They would play the clubs in England and then go and play in Europe, trying to scratch a living there. This was the first time I realised that making money from playing was definitely the exception to the rule. For the majority, it was necessary to



"The Minstrel" Pete Mitchell with his 12-string Ovation in 1978, on tour in the south of England (50 venues).



Pete Mitchell at Tweeter's.
Taken from "Outside
Looking In" video.

enjoy playing above all else. I was fortunate enough to play with some of these guitarists. I eventually received my first professional guitar. This guitar was an old Gibson acoustic six-string, with an ebony fingerboard and an incredible sound. At the vulnerable age of eighteen, I realised that I had just moved up into the big boys' league. I knew only too well that the offer of joining a band would be the thin end of the rock and roll wedge. Later I was to discover that I would be the rhythm guitarist and vocalist in such a project.

My best friend, Jimmy, had helped me to make my first imitation guitar. As a kid, he had encouraged me with most of my schoolboy dreams. On one occasion, he asked if I would like to go with him to a gig. It was a Friday evening, and the gig was being held in a school hall just around the corner from where we lived. There had been a lot of talk about this event and everyone for miles around knew about it. I said that I would go, mainly because they were having a live band, and not just playing records. Jimmy called for me at seven o'clock that evening, and I was ready to go. I was wearing what was considered trendy clothes at that time –

Chelsea boots, flares, and a Beatle jacket. My style was very much the "mod" image, even though I had been mixing with "beatniks" and "folkies," who were living down on the riverboats. Anyway, we got to the gig at Sur-

“... This was the first time I realised that making money from playing was definitely the exception to the rule...”

rey Lane School and it was very crowded. I can remember distinctly two things at that gig, the first was the band's gear, and the second was the stage.

While standing in line waiting for the band to come on, I was getting very nervous. I was very anxious for them, but then they started to play. I felt an immediate relief and a positive rush of adrenaline flow through my veins. I remember I used to get that same feeling every time I looked at those early photographs of the Shadows on stage. I felt as if I was part of the band, giving them my full support, even though we

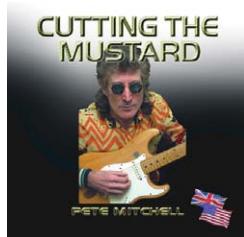


Pete Mitchell in 1986,
while touring with his
rocking boogie blues band
Four Wheel Drive.

had never met before. My enthusiasm must have filled the hall, for I was terribly excited about it all. As luck would have it, the singer was struggling with his voice, and he was definitely not cutting it. I could see the band was getting more uncomfortable as the gig went on and the audience was slowly losing interest. In view of this problem, the band played instrumentals by the Shadows, and were very reluctant to play any more songs with their singer. Jimmy turned to me and

“I have always had the opinion that the feel is far more important than anything else, particularly with the electric blues guitar...”

Pete Mitchell's self-produced *Cutting The Mustard* (2006) album is a delicious collection of 10 original tunes, including Top 5 hits "Outside Looking In", "One Track Mind", "A Matter Of Time", and "I'm Gonna Get You". "The music to die for," according to Virginia MacIsaac of Canadian cultural arts magazine *Rambles*. The album is available at CD Baby, iTunes and other online stores.



said, "Why don't you get up and sing with the band?" I said, "I would like to, but they don't know me, and we have never played together before." As quick as a flash, he told me that he had chatted with them in the interval, telling them that I knew some of their songs by the Beatles and Rolling Stones, and that I would get up onto the stage in the second half and sing with them. Still in a state of shock with the adrenaline pumping round, I finally agreed to a quick chat with the band. It became very apparent from that moment on that I was either going to fulfill my wildest dream or I was going to be at the centre of a very embarrassing event. With fingers crossed and all the encouragement in the world from Jimmy, I got up onto the stage. The band very kindly introduced me, and I couldn't help but notice out of the corner of my eye that their singer had skulked off to the back end of the hall.

Singing a mixture of Beatles songs, including "Twist and Shout," "I Saw Her Standing There" and "Money," coupled with some Rolling Stones songs such as "Come On," I was in seventh heaven. This was definitely the closest I had been to playing in

front of such a large crowd. I managed to control my nerves, and when I heard that first burst of applause, I just couldn't believe it. Until now, I had been used to the folk club audiences, who were usually laid back. Some of them were so laid back, in fact, that they were completely out of it. After the gig, Jimmy said that I had cut it and that the band was well pleased. He was great, and we still keep in touch from time to time.

The band at the Surrey Lane gig that I stood in for was called the Centaurs, and the leader turned out to be a decent guy. He asked me if I would join his band on a permanent basis, and I told him that I would need some time to think about it. Well, guess what? The very next day I got in touch with him and accepted his offer. We rehearsed regularly in an old school hall and, within months, we had an act with a good repertoire. We were also playing some original songs. I remember that one of the highlights with this band was headlining a gig at the Essoldo in Clapham Junction, now called the Grand. My first taste of recording was with these boys, and we recorded some songs in the Regent Sound Studios on Denmark Street, then known as "Tin Pan Alley." The Rolling Stones were recording an album there too, at that time. I can remember a huge Neuman microphone being placed in front of me, it was such a contrast from the Reslo ribbon microphones that we used on stage. I found out, some fifteen years later, that the lead guitarist with the Centaurs went on to teach guitar and to work for Southern Television. We actually met again by pure chance at a party in Surbiton, in 1979. If my memory serves me correctly, the Centaurs also auditioned for "Opportunity Knocks." This was a television talent show. We were close, but unfortunately, not close enough. I must add that while working with the Centaurs, I was playing rhythm guitar and singing lead vocals. Being the front man was a huge responsibility for me, and a real challenge. I worked with the Centaurs for a



Pete Mitchell at Tweeter's.
Taken from "Outside
Looking In" video.

couple of years, mainly in the pubs and clubs, occasionally we would gig the colleges.

We played around the local area, mainly in the youth clubs. At that time, there were a lot of youth clubs around, and we were always keen to play in them if we could. The best thing about the youth clubs were the large crowds that went to them. Normally, they were held in church halls, and sometimes they would use public halls or town halls. They were usually good venues with a stage, and they always had a good dance floor, with curtains and stage lights. Most of those early venues were far nicer than the majority of the pubs around today. I can remember the Centaurs on one occasion going to one of the roughest clubs around, called, the Darley Road Club. We were up on the stage giving it everything when suddenly, the whole place turned into a riot.

The "Junction mob" was there wrecking the place, fighting with the Darley Road boys, who were on their home ground. It was just like a clip from one of those Wild West movies, where you see the whole place smashed to pieces, with arms and legs everywhere. We carried on playing. When the drummer was coming to the end of his solo,

he called out "Wipeout" (apt title) and suddenly, we heard a huge crash. It happened so quickly. I saw a chair fly past my eyes, faster than the speed of sound. Immediately, the drums went dead and when I looked

“... This was to be another lesson for me to learn about the rock and roll business. I just wanted to play, money or no money...”

around, I could see that the chair had gone right through the bass drum skin, practically demolishing the poor old drummer's kit. That was it for us. Fortunately, we were escorted out of the club by the bouncers, who eventually sorted out the riot and got things back under control. Everyone I looked at had cuts and bruises, even the girls had joined in.

There was another major shock at this time when the Centaurs were playing at one of their pub gigs, in the Garratt Lane area of Wandsworth. This was a small pub, called the Wagon and Horses, and it had a very

friendly landlord. Both he and his wife were Irish, and most of the punters were too. We had been booked to play for them on a night when they decided to have the television on without the sound. There we were again, singing "Love Me Do" and so on, when suddenly the landlord ran up to the television in the middle of the song and turned the sound up full blast. We had no choice but to stop, and, to our amazement, we were witnessing a news flash showing the assassination of the American President, John F. Kennedy. Everybody in that pub was crying and shouting, and I have never seen such a disturbed crowd, they were all shellshocked. We were young and I have never forgotten that night, it certainly was a night to remember.

The Centaurs had a management team comprised of two brothers, who were both in their late twenties. One did the managing and the other brother, who bought the van, took care of the road managing. For a while, they made a good team, but when they realised that a quick return for their investment was not going to be quite so quick, things started to fall apart. This was to be another basic lesson for me to learn about the rock and roll business. I just

wanted to play, money or no money. It was the playing that mattered.

With so much enthusiasm in the early stages of the band, we opened our own club. It was on a Wednesday evening at the local church hall, and we called it the King Bee. The vicar was delighted, and I don't think he had ever seen his church so packed on a Wednesday evening before. The fact that we paid him rent for the hall pleased him immensely. He took a real liking to "rhythm and blues," and we couldn't do a thing wrong in his eyes. This was an invaluable experience for me, because it enabled me to see what was involved in being a self-contained act that had to set up its own gear and sound system. We even had our own stage clothes because we felt that our image was very important, especially for live audiences.

With human nature being what it is, I could feel the need for a change. I knew most of the local bands around at that time and I decided to play with some of them, but never really got a decent bite at the cherry in the "pop world." Even though I knew that I probably wouldn't be the next Elvis Presley, I still realised that I could be a good player, even without success visible... DR

Website:
www.stratmaster.co.uk



Dave Robb
5-string bass, vocals
(formerly with *Dr. JJ and the Blue Sharks*)



Phil Thomas
drums
(formerly with *Chris Capaldi's Blues Trio, Screaming Lord Sutch, Cactus Jack*)



Johnny B
keyboards
(formerly with *Hot Chocolate, Art Wood, Mick Avery, Dave Berry, Steve Hackett, the Blockheads*)

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INCREDIBLE BLUES PUPPIES

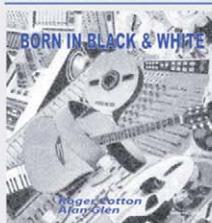


MARK MICHAEL BAND



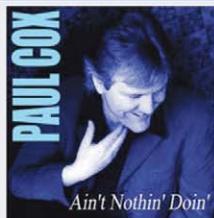
Steppin' Stone is Mark's first solo album for Note Records. Singer, songwriter and guitar virtuoso, he plays a selection of his own material with his powerful new band. A very special talent.

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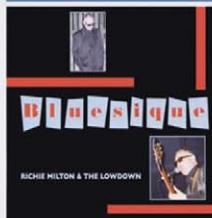


Roger Cotton (Sprinter Group) and Alan Glen (Yardbirds, Barcodes) are two seminal figures in British R&B, they collaborate here with **Born in Black & White**, an album inspired by the classic recordings of the 50s and 60s by Chess, Veejay, and other labels.

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THE YEAR OF
BLEGGAE!

Good To Me is Paul's new album, it was recorded "Live!" in the studio. Paul was joined by Val Cowell (Bad Influence), Alan Glen (Yardbirds), Roger Cotton (Splinter Group), who all give standout performances. – **Real World** contains a powerful mixture of original and established material. An honest, polished performance, that does not disappoint. – **Ain't Nothin' Doin'** was Paul's first release for the Note label, produced by Roger Cotton of Peter Green's Splinter Group, with a lineup of top musicians.

DAVE LENNOX



Lufthalle – Irish-born keyboard wizz Dave Lennox has played with Dee Dee Bridgewater, Archie Shepp and Herbie Hancock, Al Green, Bloodwyn Pig, Jay Owens, Ginger Baker, the Stylistics, Dave Berry, the Foundations, Alvin Stardust, the Equals, Slade, Thin Lizzy, and many others. This is the first of a number of new albums for Note.

for more info visit: www.note-music.co.uk



Pugsley Buzzard

by Paul Bondarovski

Hoodoo Thunder

A BLUESY JAZZ AVANT-GARDIST, BEATNIK AND VAUDEVILLIAN SURREALIST, PUGSLEY Buzzard Wateringcan has been composing and performing his own music for the past fifteen years. With a grizzly bear voice akin to Louis Armstrong and Captain Beefheart and piano stylings as flamboyant as Chico Marx, Thelonious Monk and Professor Longhair, Pugsley's music is an angular and dynamic train journey crashing through blues, jazz, cabaret, tarantellas, gypsy waltzes and fugues.

Pugsley originates from Perth, Western Australia, and currently resides near the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. In his late teens and early twenties he played bass and guitar in avant-garde rock bands, flute in a wind ensemble, even started a chamber orchestra. But it's blues and jazz that have finally and definitely become his musical destiny. As a blues singer and jazz pianist Pugsley is always on the road, touring Australia and Europe.

Pugsley Buzzard in 2004
at Sture Jazz Club,
Helsinki, Finland.



PHOTO BY OULI FEMAN

P. B.: Pugsley, when I listen to your music, I can easily imagine you playing in New York or anywhere else in America, and yet you haven't ever played there. Is the American scene so impenetrable?

Pugsley Buzzard: Of course, I'd love to play in America. I just haven't made the right connections yet, but it's definitely on the cards. You know, coming to America with your own blues and jazz is a kind of trying to sell ice to the eskimos, you have to be a very good salesman. Not at all my talent. Fortunately I have someone else to do that now.

P. B.: Your music style is hard to fit into any one genre. Do you consider yourself a bluesman or a jazzman?

Pugsley Buzzard: (Laughs.) I am a Moocher and Hoochie Coocher, a Hoodooman! That's what I wrote at my MySpace page... I guess I'm a hybrid. My singing style is definitely more blues and my piano playing is probably more jazz. I like lots of different music. I did a lot of avant-garde for quite a while, free improvisations, later composed music for theater, for short films. Lately I've been travelling much, mostly independently, using local players around the country and abroad. And the best music to spontaneously get together a band is jazz and blues, because it is largely jam based, improvised within a form familiar to all good musicians.

from Down Under

P. B.: What would it change for you as an artist if you lived in Europe or America? I mean, you are a touring artist and anyway always on the road. Never thought to change your home base?

Pugsley Buzzard: Often, but every time I thought of it, the next day I was finding enough work to sustain me for a long enough period. But I'm open to it. Australia is a big country with a small population, and jazz and blues aren't the most popular genres here. I manage to scrape by and make a living, but I suppose in the States and Europe I would have a much larger audience, a bigger market to dip into.

But again, it's also a question of having a good manager. I've got a really good one now doing good work for me, and the things are changing.

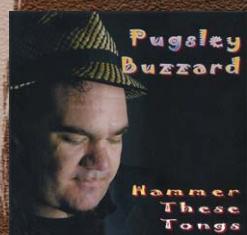
P. B.: I know you're planning a new European tour next spring – the U.K., some of the Baltic states, maybe other countries, and everywhere you are going to play with local musicians. Your music will inevitably sound different. Do you find it good or bad?

Pugsley Buzzard: Pretty good! There is a large improvisatory part to what I do, and having different players keeps it fresh. Even within Australia I have a different band in almost every town I'm coming to. Thanks to my previous extensive travels I know many musicians all over the country, so when I come once again, they already know my old stuff and we just rehearse new material. This way the music always remains fresh and exciting, just as it should be. I like it best when it's a bit on edge rather than when the musicians are overconfident with it. All the players I work with are fine musicians and great improvisors, so it's always a joy.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BABA JAMES

I've been playing with a twelve piece New Orleans style brass band in Melbourne recently, that is actually run by Nathan Ford, an old friend of mine. Nathan is a tuba and sousaphone player and composes and arranges the material for the band. When I'm in town, we do my tunes as a quartet with tuba instead of electric or double bass and as a sextet with three horns doing traditional jazz and Harlem stride material. This keeps things fresh and interesting for me.



Pugsley Buzzard's 2006 album *Hammer These Tongue* (Ironcove Records).

Website:

www.pugsleybuzzard.com

Three album national release August 7th

King Mojo Allstars, Vol.3



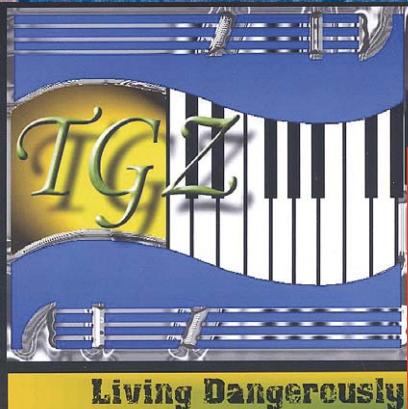
Featuring:

TGZ,
Big Shanty,
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“Some of the very best original artists playing today. Their performances light up the field in contemporary blues, roots, jazz and fusion music.”

The tracks from Big Shanty, Russell Gulley and Little G. Weevil are all **previously unreleased**.

TGZ – Living Dangerously



Featuring:

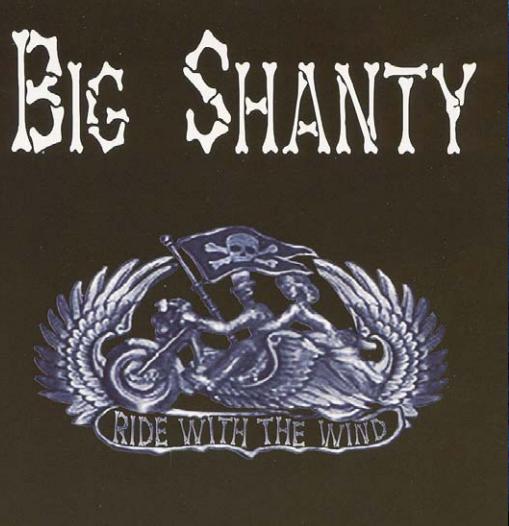
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“Is Big Shanty ‘the white Jimi Hendrix’ with a Neil Young grunge aesthetics?.. A looping drum beat from Scott Robertson, wild guitar by Liz Melendez and Hendrix-like vocals by Big Shanty... In a sense, he’s a Bluesier version of Beck... This is truly alternative music.”

Dylann DeAnna, BluesCritic.com

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Dick Wooley

by Kiki Lee

A Legend of King Mojo

The original Allman Brothers Band.
Photo courtesy of Phillip Rauls
(www.philliprauls.com).

AFTER WATCHING A NEW GENERATION OF FANS PACKING FESTIVALS AND CLUBS featuring contemporary blues, jazz, roots rock and fusion music, Dick Wooley started King Mojo Records in 2004 without major label backing. "It's always fun to be out in front of the big guys," says Wooley. His history supports this enthusiasm. He has launched several of today's legendary artists, has been awarded numerous gold and platinum albums and has himself become a legend.

In 1968, Dick Wooley was managing bands in Atlanta and promoting records in the Carolina's with F&F Arnold, where he had started several hit records, including some for Atlantic Records. Dick's successes prompted Miami's super-promo man Dick Kline to introduce him to Jerry Greenberg at an Atlantic convention in the Bahamas. Jerry Greenberg would be the next president of Atlantic, and Jerry invited Dick to work as a regional pro-

motion executive for Atlantic Records covering the Southeast and Midwest. Dick welcomed the opportunity and opened Atlantic's promotional office in Cincinnati.

Record promotion was not an easy task back in the halcyon days of vinyl records, before the Internet, or the Interstate highway system. Dick regularly drove fifteen-hundred miles a week over two-lane black top roads throughout the Midwest and Southeast

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF KING MOJO REC.



PHOTO © 2005 CARTER TOMASSI

The Allman Brothers Band on stage in Atlanta, GA. Concert of July 4, 1971. L-r: Berry Oakley, Duane Allman, Dickey Betts, Gregg Allman, Jai Johanny Johanson, Butch Trucks. Photo courtesy of Carter Tomassi, (www.messyoptics.com).

promoting Atlantic Records. It was challenging work, because at the time Atlantic/Atco only had six full-time promotion men to cover every radio stations, show promoter and record distributor in America. This small group of six guys headed by Jerry Greenberg, included Dick Kline, Leroy Little, Bob Greenberg, Vince Faracci and Dick Wooley. Dick reflected, "I felt privileged just being a member of that group, and it was a once in a lifetime experience to be working for music geniuses like Ahmet Ertegun, Jerry Wexler and Tom Dowd."

Back in the 1960s, Atlantic Records established such legendary artists as Otis Redding, Percy Sledge, Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, Joe Tex, King Curtis, Sam and Dave, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Buffalo Springfield, Delaney & Bonnie, Derek and The Dominos, Cream, Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin, Yes, Emerson, Lake and Palmer.

But, this was also a time when people were marching in the streets protesting the Vietnam war. As Dick called on the major AM radio stations to promote Atlantic artists, he found most programmers were paranoid about attracting unwanted Government attention if they played what they referred to as "anti-war" or "hippie" music. So instead of playing new progressive artists, these stations settled on playing mindless "bubble-

gum" pop songs, which were considered safe. These paranoid radio programmers missed out on a once in a generation music revolution by not playing Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, Eric Clapton...

This era was tough on record promoters too, their jobs depended on getting new records on the radio, and the following personal account is just one example of the "Big Brother" times. Dick Wooley was in Miami's Criteria Studios when legendary producer Tom Dowd was recording "Layla" with Eric Clapton, Duane Allman, Bobby Whitlock, Jim Gordon and Carl Radle, known as Derek and The Dominos. It was electric in the studio each night. Ahmet Ertegun, the President of Atlantic Records, loved the blues and was usually there. Much later, anticipation for the album release was big, but major AM radio stations refused to play it, citing the same old excuses. "For me ... this was the last straw in dealing with programmers who would not play great music like this," Dick recalls. "They sold airtime as rock and roll stations, so I reasoned, they should play new progressive rock. New music is what rock and roll is all about, right?.. Wrong! I knew I had to find a better way to get airplay for new artists."

In 1971, Dick had a life changing motorcycle wreck and began to consider his own and his family's future. He said, "I'd worked non-stop for many years with Atlantic, now the timing was right and I decided on a vacation ... a long one." For the rest of the year Dick, his wife and young son Christian traveled through Europe and North Africa.

Subsequent to Dick's leaving Atlantic Records, it took their great promotion staff, that now included Phillip Rauls and Mario Medius, a year of hard work to get "Layla" on stubborn radio playlists.

DICK's extended hiatus was well timed, because the tide turned and radio had changed. When he came back, many of his old friends were programming new inde-

Phillip Rauls and Dick Wooley.



pendent FM stations and playing progressive rock, driving the timid AM's out of the market.

After months of vacation traveling, Dick was energized, full of ideas, and ready for a challenge. In early 1972, Frank Fenter called Dick from Macon, Georgia and invited him to a meeting with himself and his partner, artist manager Phil Walden.

Dick had worked with Frank Fenter at Atlantic Records. Frank ran Atlantic's European operation from the company's London office. He was a brilliant record man, and everyone was surprised when he'd moved in 1969 from London to Macon to start Capricorn Productions. In Macon, Frank Fenter was the man behind the scene that pulled the deal together with Atlantic Records, allowing Atlantic to finance the company. Then, to start the ball rolling, Jerry Wexler gave them a Top 10 hit single, "Sunshine" by Jonathan Edwards.

Phil and Frank persuaded Dick to come onboard and help them transform their production company into Capricorn Records. In the new venture, Frank naturally would manage the record company production, Phil would manage up-and-coming artists Wet Willie and the Allman Brothers Band, and Dick would do national record promotions.

They shared what had been the late Otis Redding's office in the ramshackle Redwall Music Publishing building on Cotton Avenue. From the first day, Dick knew it was going to be a tough work when he called radio stations around the country and they'd ask: "Capricorn what? Allman who? Macon where?" Many in the music community had openly stated the Allman Brothers Band would never recover from the untimely loss of their brilliant leader Duane Allman, and at that time the Allman Brothers albums had only sold a few thousand copies. But, Dick had listened to the tracks that producer Johnny Sandlin was making for the company (raw tracks from the ABB's yet to be released *Eat A Peach*) and believed in the band's poten-



Frank Fenter, Dick Wooley and Phil Walden in 1972.
Photo by Rob Durner-Fenter.



Dick Wooley with platinum "edition" of the Allman Brothers Band *Eat A Peach* album.

tial. He decided instead of endless dialing of stations that he didn't know, to target old friends at the new FM radios (and a few still at AM) and began calling in ancient favors to play *Eat A Peach*. Even though Southern jam rock was not the type of music these stations were accustomed to, several of Dick's radio pals in Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles began playing the new album and were stunned at the good response from listeners.

Eat A Peach began to inch up the charts, and Dick went to work on the more conservative middle-American radio markets. The album was added to more and more stations, gathering chart speed until early the next year it became the Allman Brothers Band's first gold (later platinum) album.

Taking advantage of the growing success of *Eat A Peach*, Dick had the radical idea of creating a special New Year's radio show to promote Southern Rock. It was 1973, and nothing had ever been done like this before, but betting on strength in numbers Dick lined



The original Marshall Tucker Band.

up dozens of independent AM and FM stations across the South, cobbled them together, bought time on AT&T telephone long distance lines and called it a “radio network.” It had only cost about \$700, so Dick gave the show free to his affiliated stations provided they played his albums in heavy rotation in the weeks prior to the broadcast and gave Capricorn advertising spots during the broadcast.

The New Year’s concert live from New Orleans featured the Allman Brothers Band and Wet Willie. The program was broadcast in only eight states, but was a big success for promoters, bands, radio stations, the new “network” and Capricorn Records. And not least, Capricorn got several great tracks to use in later ABB projects, and the classic live album, *Drippin’ Wet* for Wet Willie, produced by Johnny Sandlin.

With momentum building, Dick began planning the next New Year’s show. He added 150 stations to the “network” (now called “CapCom”) and acquired two national sponsors, creating the first vertically integrated Rock & Roll radio promotion. The upcoming 1974 event was on a much larger scale than the first one. It would be broadcast from San Francisco’s Cow Palace, with a capacity of 15,000, and the legendary Fillmore East

and West owner Bill Graham was to be the event promoter. Dick and Bill had invited San Francisco’s FM pioneer DJ Tom Donahue to be MC. Tom, in turn, asked several of his San Francisco rock luminary friends to sit in on the show to add even more flavor to the spectacle.

Bill Graham was an original showman, and he proved it during the sold-out show when he descended from the highest balcony in the great hall onto the stage at midnight, inside a giant Plexiglas hour-glass, dressed as “Old Father Time” with a flowing white beard. The Allman Brothers, Boz Scaggs, Charlie Daniels Band, Marshall Tucker and the Grateful Dead all stopped playing for a few seconds to hail the New Year, then picked back up on the jam just where they left it. It was a surreal and magic New Year!

The coast-to-coast event was the “first of a kind” for radio. In addition, the show was picked up by Armed Forces Radio and broadcast live all over the world to an estimated 40 million listeners. By design, the show launched a group that Dick and Frank brought into Capricorn, the Marshall Tucker Band.

The results in album sales after the event were immediate – the Allman Brothers’ current and catalog albums sold through the roof, and the debut Marshall Tucker’s album sold 250 thousand copies within a couple of months, becoming their first gold (later platinum) album.

The New Year’s broadcast was a headline grabbing success. The following week, news of the event was splashed across the front page of every entertainment trade paper of the day, including banner headlines in *Billboard*, *Radio & Records*, *Cashbox*. Later, in July of 1975, the prestigious business magazine *Fortune* printed a major article on the rise of Capricorn Records with group and individual stories on Phil, Frank and Dick.

In 1976, Frank Fenter played Dick a track from a new Elvin Bishop album that was in production. Dick liked the song, but found



The original Grinderswitch.

that it needed “something” to become ready for radio. He took the tape into his office and played around with the arrangement for a couple of days, trying to find the right combination that would fit seamlessly into several radio formats. Once satisfied, Dick and Frank flew it to LA, like they had done once before with the Marshall Tucker tape, and played the Elvin Bishop track for Warner Brothers’ Mo Ostin, Ed Rosenblatt and Russ Thyrett. They loved it, and in just a few short weeks “Fooled Around And Fell In Love” became the number one single on all Top 100 record charts.

For a long time Dick had been restless and eager to make a change, he reasoned there would never be a better time to start his own record company than with the Elvin Bishop single at number one, two Allman Brothers albums high on the charts and two Marshall

Tucker albums climbing to the top. (While at Capricorn, Dick also launched into the national spotlight the great Southern Blues band Wet Willie, venerable singer-songwriters and Eric Clapton’s “favorite band” Cowboy, the legendary Southern Rock band Grinderswitch, Bluesman John Hammond Jr. and rising Country star Hank Williams Jr.)

Dick decided to resign as VP of Promotions at the peak of Capricorn Records’ success.

Since Dick moved to Macon in 1972, the company’s growth had been truly astonishing. In four short years, Capricorn Records had come from a production company with an empty bank account and three guys with a dream into a Southern Rock Empire with sixty employees, a roster of great artists recognized worldwide and with sales of \$30 million a year.



Molly Hatchet.

WHAT a wild year 1976 had been! Dick left Capricorn Records with several hit records at the top of the charts, opened the doors at Dick Wooley Associates (DWA), helped the Jimmy Carter presidential campaign fund with free shows, and started Rabbit Records. Dick's old friends at Atlantic Records became interested in financing his new Macon, Georgia based Rabbit label, and a distribution deal was made.

Flush with development money, Dick asked top Warner Brothers' promotion man Al Moss to join the new company and invited two great working bands of the day to sign on with Rabbit Records: Dru Lombar's Grinderswitch, managed by Alex Hodges, who today heads up Neiderlander, and the Winters Brothers, managed by Charlie Daniels' manager Joe Sullivan.

Rabbit Records charted both the Grinderswitch and Winters Brothers albums that first year and built career momentum by booking the bands on hundreds of tour dates opening for the Charlie Daniels Band, the Allman Brothers Band, Marshall Tucker Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Dick's office on Walnut Street in Macon was across the street from the Armstrong Booking Agency, and its owner Pat Armstrong had an extensive roster of working bands (he had also been Lynyrd Skynyrd's first manager). Pat was anxious because he hadn't participated in Southern Rock's popularity and came to Dick one day in 1977 to ask if he would help him launch a new band he managed, called Molly Hatchet. Pat said they were being looked at by a major producer and a record company.

Dick went to see Pat's band in the basement club of a seedy Macon flop-house called the Dempsey Hotel. The venue was a nightmare with water standing an inch deep on the dance floor. "It was a miracle nobody was electrocuted," Dick said later. However, as bad as the surroundings, Dick found the band highly promising. Later that year, a month before Molly Hatchet's album was released, Dick added so many radio stations to its promotion, that within a week Epic Records responded by throwing big development money at the new "bad boys" of Southern Rock.

Molly Hatchet's debut album was a big success, first going gold, then platinum. Dick was happy because he had launched his first million selling band since leaving Capricorn, which, unfortunately, after his departure had been unable to launch any major artist and was going bankrupt.

In 1980, the "disco craze" swept over the country like a tsunami and destroyed all airplay in its path. Dick had zero interest in disco music and decided to sit out the dance, take time off and start a quiet life at the nearest beach.

In 1981, he moved to Tybee – a small island at the dead-end of Highway 80, off the



Dick Wooley, Becky Bondia and Al Moss in 1976.

coast of Savannah, Georgia. At the time, it was a quiet fishing village of about 1500 people, and a perfect spot to relax, think, write songs for his publishing company Cotton States Music, learn to sail a Hobie Cat, build a beach house and look at the record business from the rear-view mirror.

FAST-FORWARD to 2004, we find Dick enjoying sunset views from the deck of his beach house, still writing songs for his publishing company and, with his business partner, Benchmark/Atlantic President Arthur Schultz, having just finished building and selling 500 new college and beachfront investment condos.

Never one to be without a project for long, Dick decided that a new goal was needed. He watched a new generation of fans fill to capacity the fusion-blues festivals and clubs around the country and sensed an opportunity to serve an under-served market. After talking with musician friends, he reasoned that if he started a label, its artists would have to be so special that they would brand it as a unique, original, not just cookie cutter label. On the short list of such original artists was his good friend of 30 years, guitar legend Dru Lombar, leader of Grinderswitch. They soon met, Dru loved the idea and immediately signed on to the new King Mojo label.

Traditionally, blues and jazz fans have driven the success of blues music, but today's new generation of fans expect something new. They want all kinds of blues-based music integrated with roots blues, rock, jazz and club beats. It's really cool stuff, and it's being done nightly in the successful clubs, but could it be a new direction? The whole label just seemed to grow around that one idea and immediately found traction and gained a momentum all its own.

As the new label began to evolve, its one principle was to find great music. "Find the best original artists in contemporary blues, jazz, roots rock and fusion, then showcase them exclusively using the Internet," Dick says. A few months search revealed several great artists equal to the challenge. By mid-2004 they were showcased on King Mojo's first Internet based release, *King Mojo Allstars, Vol. 1*. The artists were: Diane Durrett, the cutting edge of blue-eyed soul; Mike Lowry, a multi-talented guitarist, singer, the real deal; the Polk Street Blues Band, a blues-rock jam act; Grinderswitch.

Dru Lombar and the new members of Grinderswitch brought it all back home with the band's first studio album in three decades, *Ghost Train From Georgia*. Dru dedicated the new band and new album to his late Grinderswitch bandmates Joe Dan Petty and Steven Miller. Tragically, his own life was cut short on September 2, 2005...

After a surprising success, other artists were added on the second release, *King Mojo Allstars, Vol. 2*: Big Shanty, who transforms blues into beats, tales of hard luck, hard times and hard women; Beau Hall, an unstoppable force of energy; Bill Stewart and the ATL, original jazz cooked up by the very best Atlanta musicians; Little Phil, a great Southern Soul singer; Dustin Sargent, a jazz statement made and a powerful new wave.

In August 2007, *King Mojo Allstars, Vol. 3* was released, featuring some of today's very best original artists in contemporary blues, roots, jazz and fusion music: TGZ, Big Shanty, Liz Melendez, Russell Gulley and Little G. Weevil. The tracks from Big Shanty, Russell Gulley and Little G. Weevil are all previously unreleased.

BB
TBB

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The truth is in the questions

An interview with Bass Reeves

by Paul Bondarovski

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO ASK AN ARTIST WHAT HE WANTED TO SAY WITH HIS music, sculpture or painting. A song is rarely what it is *about*. It's what you feel and think when you listen to it. It's "what you get is what you hear," and we all hear different... Still it is always interesting to compare our thoughts and feelings with those of the author, especially after having heard such a beautiful album as Bass Reeves' *If You Ignore the Truth*, whose every song is bewitching, stirring and full of deep meaning.

P.B.: Bass, when I listened to your *If You Ignore the Truth* album for the first time, I told you that it was the best I had heard in at least three years. Yet you say it's your maiden effort in music. I'm sorry, but I just can't believe it... Your album is of such a professional caliber...

Bass Reeves: Still it's true, Paul... Well, essentially it is true. It is my first effort as a recording artist in his own right. As for the songs... I have been writing since I was a child – songs, poems, stories... Played violin, clarinet, piano... Guitar too. I love the creative process, no matter what domain. As a young adult I wrote everything from scholarly papers to TV game shows. In graduate school I was a Ford Foundation Doctoral Fellow and after was on the creative writing teams of internationally broadcast shows like *Tattletales* and *Double Dare*, both Goodson and Todman Productions. Have even been offered publishing contracts with Warner Music, which I did not sign, though, the conditions were not really attractive... but I was flattered anyway... But Paul, should we

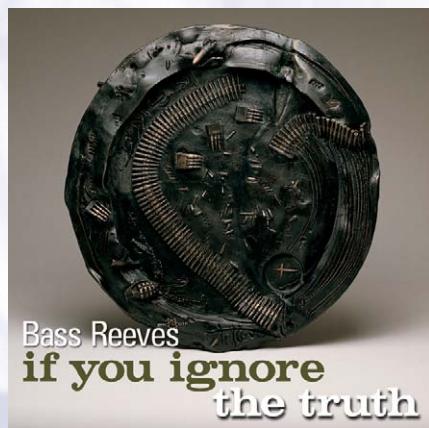
really go deeply into my past? I want to be evaluated in the here and now of what I am doing... I have always wanted to be a performing songwriter. This has always been my dream. I put it off for too long. Now it's my *raison d'être*.

P.B.: I love all the tunes on the album, but "If You Ignore the Truth", the title track, seems to be of special importance to you...

Bass Reeves: It's from a 70s perspective during my life in Los Angeles, though I wrote it in 2002... It's my take on how I have observed women being treated in the music, entertainment business... well, not only! I once picked up a young woman who was hitchhiking. She turned out to be a struggling singer. We became friends, so I could follow her career. She made it pretty darn big, you know, but paid a very big personal price... Watched her and many other vulnerable dreamers end up with needles in their arms... Some made it back, others did not. The business can be cruel...

P.B.: In "The Times They Need A Changing" you say, "Sorry, Mr. Dylan, I had to play with your line. I wish I could tell you that everything was fine, but I'm sorry I can't, there's still trouble in the air, I'm still lookin for god but the devil he's everywhere..." Do you think Dylan was a voice crying out in the desert?

Bass Reeves' album
If You Ignore the Truth.
Cover art: *Ground War*,
bronze sculpture
by Neil Tetkowski.



we are asking ourselves...

Bass Reeves: No!... I think Dylan was and still is a very misunderstood person. He is one of the great lyrical poets of all times ... maybe the greatest artist of the 20th century... But I believed him when he protested the label of “voice of a generation” ... As a wordsmith it was his job to sculpt great pieces, and he did, but that does not mean he ... personified every word he wrote. I don’t stand behind every word I write. As an artist I work it the way I can, sometimes from the inside out, other times from the outside in. In the end it’s all about what makes sense in the moment...

The times, they are always changing! Songwriters have had some impact, sometimes songs move things in the direction they like ... we like ... other times not. But if our intent is to push ... then we become politicians more than artists, we fail to do the job which is ours.

P.B.: A debuting recording artist with no major label support, you are accompanied by, I’d

say, an all-star band! Ken Kaufman on keys, Gary Mallaber on drums, Frank Grizanti on guitars, Jerry Livingston on bass... Plus a variety of others... How did you get them playing for you?

Bass Reeves: Well... they are all good dear friends! But, naturally, they are musicians and have to get some bread on the table, so I did the right thing – I paid them well! (*Laughs.*) They went to the wall and beyond for me, this was truly a team effort... The other key figures were Robbie Konikoff and Mike Rorick of Audio Magic studios, and of course, the executive producer Dan Lounsbury.

P.B.: On *Midnight Special Blues Radio* especially successful were the songs “That’s How I Get” and “Johnny” – both made it to Number One...

Bass Reeves: Paul, I love your listeners!... “That’s How I Get”... Well, it’s just a way of telling all the women in my life how I felt after they broke my heart. It’s not about any



Bass Reeves Band (*l-r*):
Ken Kaufman
(keyboards),
Bass Reeves,
Frank Grizanti
(guitars),
Gary Mallaber
(drums, percussion),
Jerry Livingston
(bass).



Bass Reeves in Dallas.

quest, since it deals with the “all the lonely people, where do they all come from” question...

P. B.: Paul McCartney has not found an answer and went on looking for it in “She’s Leaving Home”, then in “Another Day”... You say that “Johnny” is your answer to “Eleanor Rigby”. Does it mean that you have found it...?

Bass Reeves: ... He wasn’t looking for an answer, but for the truth about it... And so was I. The truth is in the questions we are asking ourselves, not in the answers offered by somebody else. “Johnny” is my answer to the song, not to the question...

Answers to these kind of questions rarely work. Many people have taken John’s “Come Together” for an answer, for a kind of solution. They just didn’t understand! And what have they got? “They are there all together, never touching each other, no matter how much they want to, condemned ever not to...”

P. B.: OK, if the truth is in the questions, then here’s one more! Does your all-star band follow you on gigs? That is, do you perform mostly solo or with a band?

Bass Reeves: I am currently working with a trio, which includes Frank Grizanti on guitar and Smilin’ Eddie Godfrey on percussion. But I also play solo, duo and with a full rock band, it depends on the gig... An important date at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington DC, I played as a duo with Frank Grizanti.

P. B.: What’s next?

Bass Reeves: Oh, much!... I have written enough new material for about ten albums, so I’m hoping to get some recording done soon... But I am really focusing on live performances. You know ... this incredible feeling of audiences connecting to me and me to them. I love the exchange of energy. Just want it to keep on going. I want it to last. It’s what makes me happy.

BR

Website: www.myspace.com/bassreeves

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Joe Grandwilliams,
Goodtimes Magazine.

45 Years on the Highway

THE BEATLES ARE UNIQUE BECAUSE THEY DRAMATICALLY CHANGED WITH EVERY ALBUM. THE STONES are unique because they still sound as they did years before. The Australian band The Others is unique because it does them both: it is constantly changing while keeping the best of its earlier sound. This could only be guessed on *Hit The Wall* (2004) album, but becomes evident on *The Devil Made Me Do It* (2006).



The title track from *The Devil Made Me Do It* reflects the band's odyssey through time. Feel the spirit of the 60s in the beginning, then step on a vamping guitar bridge taking you through decades into the 90s, and when vocals return, find yourself enveloped by the 21st century sound.

Transcendental rocker "Night Out On The Highway" and tradition reviving "The Best Part Of Midnight" are two more songs I love the most. But it's "Beechworth Special"

that on 21 April 2006 made it to #1 on the Midnight Special Blues Radio's daily charts and stayed for three weeks in the Top 20.

Originally formed as a duo in 1963 in Adelaide by then teenaged Ian Nancarrow and Terry Radford, The Others became a five piece rock outfit by 1964, ready to show the world their original take on blues-rock. While most of their contemporaries were mimicking the styles in vogue, The Others were strutting their self-penned stuff, devel-

The Others (l-r):
Jeff Gurr (bass),
Stevan Korovljev (guitar),
Ian Nancarrow
(guitar, harmonica),
Joff Bateman (drums),
David Skull (vocals).



Stevan Korovljev
and Ian Nancarrow.

opping their own sound. From the outset they played a different brand of music than the rest of the bands around and have remained true to that musical philosophy ever since.

In the world of rock and roll, surviving 10 years is unusual, 20 years is a massive feat, but to keep going for as long as The Others have is staggering, to say the least. The

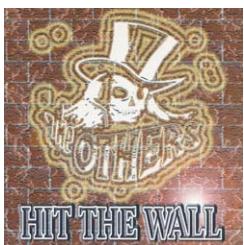
band has survived countless long road trips (with the associated incidents, smashes and, of course, a few serious parties), let-downs, break-ups and personal tragedies. The music has remained their driving force, which helped them to endure and become truly iconic legends of Australian music.

Lee Brilleaux (Dr. Feelgood), John Mayall, Steve Marriot, Spencer Davis all suggested that The Others try their luck overseas, but Australia has remained their home base.

For more than 40 years the band has played all around the country, in cities and towns, stadiums, pubs, clubs and dives with a consistent enthusiasm and obvious passion. With music becoming more and more polluted by the almighty dollar, it is refreshing to see a band remaining true to its roots and values. The Others have always done things their own way and this independence and self-belief still shines through their music.

The story certainly doesn't end there. The Others are as excited about the future as they are proud of their past.

The band's logo, created in 1964-65, signifies:
"Had a good time –
gone too far".



Hit The Wall (2004).



The Devil Made Me Do It (2006).



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE OTHERS

Website: www.theothers.com.au

Robert Ross

Birth of the Blues Songs

ROBERT ROSS IS AN AWARD WINNING BLUES ARTIST, A NASTY GUITARIST, A SOULFUL VOCALIST AND AN imaginative songwriter. He and his band play hard driving boogie, hip grinding soul, burning rock 'n' roll, and low down & dirty blues. Bill Carlton of the *New York Daily News* expressed it best when he wrote, "Robert Ross is a fine singer, a snappy lyricist, and an even better blues rock guitarist ... cut from the same cloth as B.B. King, Muddy Waters and Johnny Winter. Time after time Ross delivers the goods." Every song has a story. Robert's original songs have more – kind of real "mini-novels" on how they came to be and what they are about, little insights into what the inspiration was. Here go some of them. – *P. B.*

The Ring

I was crossing the street and looked down and saw something glitter in the noonday sun. I reached down and picked up a ring. My first thought was, "Hey, maybe it has some gold in it," and I stuffed it into my pocket, thinking how I would spend the money.

Later that day I came home and was talking to my wife, when I remembered the ring in my pocket. I said, "Look what I found."

She looks it over for about three seconds and says, "You know what this is, don't you?"

"Yeah, it's a ring," says I matter of factly.

She says, "Duh, of course it's a ring ... but what kind of a ring?"

"It's a gold ring?" I said, not quite getting her drift.

"That's not what I mean, Robert. I mean it's a wedding ring. You wouldn't know about that 'cause you never got me one... Did you read the inscription?"

"Uh, no, I didn't know it had an inscription."

"Well, it does. Read the inscription," she said, handing me back the ring. "Well?" she says.

"It says, 'June 15th, 1993.' Wow, that's the same date as today, but a different year," says I.

"You know what this means?" says my wife with a gleam in her eye.

"Uh, yeah, it's an incredible coincidence," says I, proudly.

"Noooo, it means that the couple had a fight on their anniversary. She took off her ring and threw it into the street, you walked by and picked it up and showed it to me."

She starts to put the ring on her finger. "You never did give me a wedding ring if you remember. This one will do just fine, thanks."

Mr. Jelly Roll

All blues singers seem to have at least one really bawdy, low down and dirty blues song. I didn't have one so I set about to write one. I worked on it for three or four days, finally finishing the tune early in the morning.

I had a gig that afternoon at a women's community residence in East New York, Brooklyn. Having just finished writing the song, I didn't have the lyrics memorized, so I wrote them out on a big index card, grabbed my acoustic guitar and drove off to the gig.

In case you don't know East New York, Brooklyn ... it is without a doubt one of the roughest and most dangerous places in America. Loaded with burned out or oth-

Robert Ross.

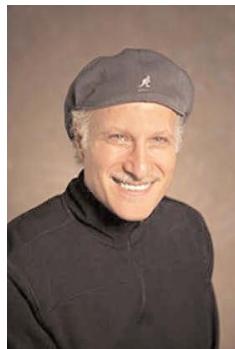


PHOTO COURTESY OF FONTAINEBLEU REC.

erwise abandoned buildings and vacant lots. The area was crawling with prostitutes, drug addicts and street hustlers. A women's community residence is where ex-drug addicts, ex-convicts and the mentally ill live until they are deemed fit to re-enter society. Some of these women hadn't seen a man in a long, long time, let alone heard one sing a song like "Mr. Jelly Roll." I didn't know what kind of a place my agent (Freddie Orange of Hospital Audiences, Inc.) was sending me to, I just gladly accepted the gig as always, and called the facility for directions. I've performed in hundreds of mental institutions, nursing homes and rehab places of all kinds, but I wasn't prepared at all for a women's community residence... Uh, uh...

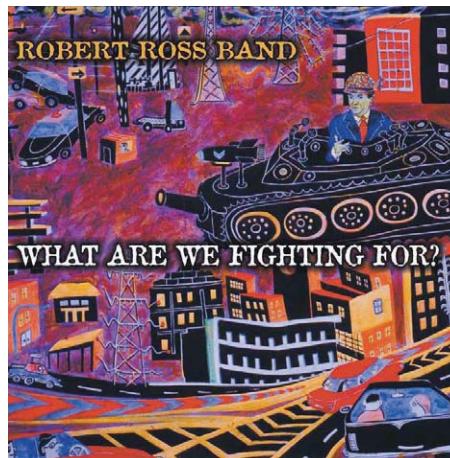
I took out my guitar and started to sing the tune reading the lyrics right off the card. Immediately the women started laughing and hooting and hollering and getting all excited. Some of them began jumping up and down and lifting their skirts up over their heads. I'm thinking, "Wow, what a reaction, this song must be a hit!"

I mean, it was only natural for me to think this because, after all, I had never seen a reaction like this, except in film clips of the Beatles or Elvis.

When I got home, I called the guys in my band to tell them about this fantastic new song I wrote and the reaction it illicited in these women, still not quite grasping the situation there in East New York.

I practiced the hell out of that tune and memorized the lyrics, and then a few days later we had a gig with the whole band in an Upper East Side club in Manhattan. We did a few tunes to warm the crowd up and then, when I thought the time was right, I launched into "Mr. Jelly Roll," giving it everything I had.

People were walking by totally oblivious of the band and the song. They talked with each other or sat glued to the television sets watching a basketball game. No reaction at all. I mean, zilch. Nada. Zippo.



The Robert Ross Band's 2004 release, *What Are We Fighting For?* (FountainBleu Records). Cover by Ed Rath ("Economic Stimulus Package").

I began to get a bit depressed, when it occurred to me: well, maybe the women at the facility were a little ... "lonely" ...

Broken Hearted Man

When I was still living with my wife, she had a friend who was having problems with her boyfriend. She came over to talk to my wife one night, and they spent a couple of hours in the kitchen talking. I heard a lot of crying and stuff, but everytime I came into the kitchen to supposedly get something to eat from the fridge, they would just clam up like a couple of oysters. Later, after her distraught friend left, I asked my wife what was going on. She told me the poor woman was having problems with her boyfriend. He's been taking her for granted, stepping out on her and mistreating her. And I'm thinking like, "Wow, that would make a great song." I'm so sensitive sometimes ... it's scary. Anyhooo, a few days later, I finish writing the song, and play it for my wife, and she says it's really good. So I say, "Hey, what about if we have the woman sing it?" My wife says, "Are you stark raving nuts? You're not even supposed to know about her problems, what she said to me was private. Now you want to write a song about it and have her sing it? What the hell is with you?" Re-



The Robert Ross Band are:

Jon Loyd (keyboards),
Mark Dann (bass),
Steve Holley (drums),
formerly with:
Paul McCartney & Wings,
Joe Cocker, Rod Stewart,
Elton John, etc.)



PHOTO BY RICO RHO

Photograph of Robert Ross performing in Herald Square, New York, on 11 September 2003. The photo also appears on Robert Ross Band's CD *What Are We Fighting For?*

alizing she might be right, I went back and rewrote the song so that I could sing it. The song has yet to appear on one of our CDs, but it will someday. Hopefully soon.

The Record Biz

When Irving Berlin wrote "There's No Business Like Show Business," it was a heartfelt tribute to the profession he dearly loved. "The Record Biz," on the other hand, is a liver venting, bile spewing roast of the profession I sometimes hate. I love the music very deeply, of course, but the business end can be unfuckingbelievable at times. The greed, the lies, the back biting, the pettiness, the egos, the disappointments ... the agents, the managers, the bar owners, the lawyers, the record companies... Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't trade places with anybody, but a little money and some health insurance wouldn't hurt. It's a tough way to make a living. People didn't think I should record "The Record Biz" because it might offend some big wig. Yeah, maybe, but I doubt it, big wigs don't listen to unsolicited material, right? Besides, I think it's too funny to get steamed up about... Hey, what am I laughing at, this is my life??

If I Had Known

A song about partying too hardy, and too often for way too long. The whole phrase, "If I had known that I would live this long, I would have taken better care of myself," has been attributed to both Mickey Mantle and Eubie Blake.

Mantle thought he would die young, like all the other men in his family, from one dread disease or another. Injuries and alcohol and late night parties kept him from a Ruthian career. Had he only taken better care of himself, he might have broken Ruth's home run record in 1961, along with Roger Maris, but he got injured and finished with "only" 54 that year. Still, he managed to live

a pretty long life, a lot longer than he had reasons to expect considering his lifestyle and his gene pool.

Eubie Blake, who lived to be 100, was a great piano player and successful composer who wrote the song "I'm Just Wild About Harry" and other old classics from the early days of the 20th century. One night, on The Tonight Show, he was asked by Johnny Carson how it feels to be 100 years old, and he answered, "If I had known that I would live this long, I would have taken better care of myself."

I thought it would make a great song title.

69 Chevy

I had a car that no mechanic on Earth could fix. It was only seven years old when I got it, but it was breaking down all the time. A car should last longer than that, that's a rip-off. And the mechanics I tried didn't seem to know their business either. The same damn problems over and over and... The beast

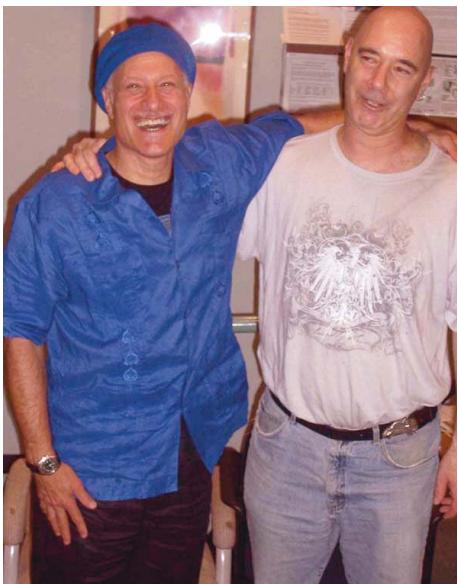


PHOTO BY GARY STUKES

Robert Ross with Roger Z, the host of the Working Musicians Show on White Plains Cable TV.



was draining me dry. It was a gas guzzling, oil burning, water boiling, smoke belching, money sucking, gut wrenching, corroded heap of rusty nuts and bolts. It was obsolete in its own time. It was oversized (who could park a boat in Manhattan?). It was overpriced (when it was new). And it was a perfect example of overrated American engineering. Do the words "lemon" or "junkyard" mean anything at all to ya??

Why did I keep it? Well, maybe it could not go far, but at least it was a place I could go with my girlfriend after a movie.

Bronco Busting Blues Boys

I ran into an old friend, bass player Billy Troiani, at a NYC club in 1978, where he was playing with bluesman Eddie Kirkland.

I hadn't seen Billy since we both were going to Campbell Junior High School in Flushing, Queens in the mid-60s. Billy was already a musician by then. I remember him playing bass in the school auditorium with a band he was in, called the Double O Souls. They were good too.

Eddie Kirkland is a very powerful black man of about 5' 8" and about 190 lbs. He is from Georgia and has a muscular and soulful voice. He plays very good guitar and harp too. He has written some great songs, one of which was recorded by John Mayall. He can dance too. When he performs, he jumps up and down, rolls around on the floor, does cartwheels and hand springs and puts on one hell of a show.

They were looking for a guitarist to fill out the sound, and I got the job. The band was based in New Paltz, NY, which is about two hours north of NYC. I moved into Billy's house and started playing with the band.

Our first gig was at Dr. Generosity's, on 73rd St. and 2nd Ave. in Manhattan. They had a low ceiling over the stage there that was only about 8 feet high. They also had a bunch of water pipes, PA wires and conduit cables up there. Eddie was jumping up

and down and doing some dance steps and the crowd was getting into it. Then he turned to me in the middle of a song and said, "I'm gonna get down on my knees, and I want you to jump up on my shoulders."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I asked him for a confirmation, which I got.

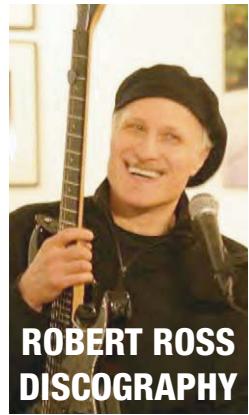
I turned to Billy, still mid-song, and said, "Eddie says I should jump up on his shoulders. What do you think?" Billy had been working with Eddie for ten years already, he'd know if he was having a stroke or not. "If he said it, then do it, he's the boss," Billy deadpanned.

Eddie got down on his knees and looked over at me. I hesitated. He looked again. Eddie is a big man. I jumped up on his shoulders. Eddie rose to his feet and started playing a solo with his guitar behind his head. I figured, okay, I'll do the same thing. Now we both were soloing with the guitars behind our heads, like a two-headed blues totem pole. Somehow I managed to stay on top of Eddie's shoulders while he was jumping around and doing his thing. Eddie is strong as a horse. I've seen him lift a huge PA cabinet that weighed about 200 pounds and carry it out on his shoulder with one hand holding it in place like it was a basket of Easter eggs.

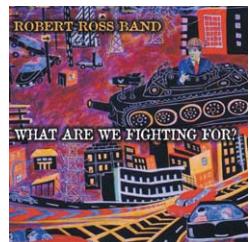
Eddie started to spin while he was jumping. I had to duck the pipes on the ceiling, and I was missing notes on the guitar. I was holding on for dear life. He spun faster. I fell off and landed on my back, some ungodly chord blaring from my guitar in the process. My head missed the bass drum by only about two inches. I would have been brain dead had my head crashed into the drum from that height, but by some miracle I was unhurt. I got up and kept right on playing much to Eddie's relief and amusement.

Eddie never asked me to do that again, but I would have obliged him, given enough head room, on top and on bottom... 

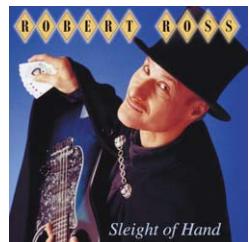
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ROBERT ROSS DISCOGRAPHY



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(EP, 2004, FountainBleu).



Sleight of Hand
(2002, FountainBleu).

Lightness ... to Dark
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It's Rough 'n' Tough
(1984, Victoria/RCA).

Introducing Robert Ross
(EP, 1981, Baron).

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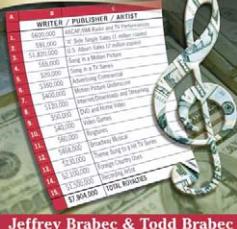
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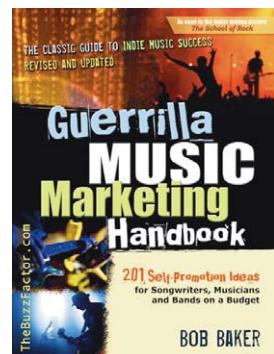
Todd Brabec is the Executive VP and Director of Membership for ASCAP and Jeff Brabec is the VP of Business Affairs for Chrysalis Music Group. Former recording artists and entertainment lawyers, they frequently present seminars and workshops about the music business.

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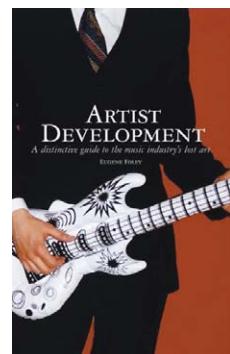
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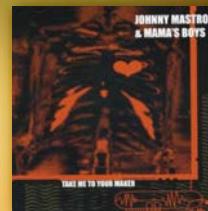
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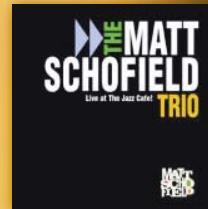
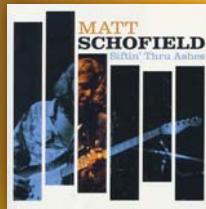
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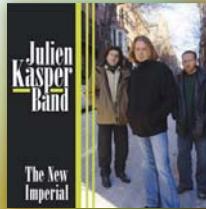
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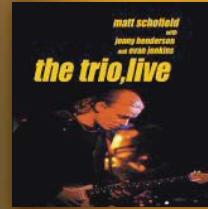
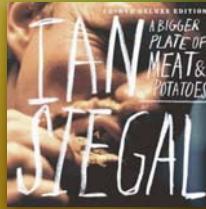
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I wanted to feel the ache and turgor... But, alas, the air was dry; dry as the lips of
LA when she has seen the last swig of welfare wine pour down her throat and
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Begging! Stealing! Thoughts of a future with no dreams...
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